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MAROONED

VOL. I



MAROONED

BY

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AUTHOR OF "THE GOLDEN HOPE," "THE WRECK OF THE 'GROSVENOR,'" "
"THE LADY MAUD," "A SEA QUEEN," "JACK'S COURTSHIP,"
"THE FROZEN PIRATE," ETC. ETC.

MAROON—To put a person ashore on an uninhabited island
Nautical Dictionary

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. I

London

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MAROONED.

CHAPTER I.

I RECEIVE A LETTER.

I RETURNED to my lodgings in London one night in June in the year eighteen hundred and something, and found a letter lying upon the table. It was from my cousin, Alexander Fraser, and was dated at Rio Janeiro. This was a man whom I had neither seen nor heard of for some years. We had been sent to sea as boys in the East India Company's service, and together had made three voyages in the same ship to Bombay ; which in those ambling days of trade, when a four months' passage to the Bay of Bengal was considered a good run, meant a long and intimate association. Through

the death of my dear mother I came into money enough to render me independent, and so I quitted old ocean after three years of seafaring. Fraser made a fourth voyage and I then lost sight of him. When later on I wrote to his sisters in the north of Scotland, I was told he had left his ship at Bombay to accompany a tea-grower, who had been a passenger in the vessel, to his plantations. That was the last I heard of him. As I held his letter in my hand, memory recalled him as a fair, blue-eyed, bronzed young fellow, exceedingly good-looking, a very nimble and alert seaman, fitter for the navy indeed than for the tea-waggon service, full of spirit and resolution and extremely impulsive.

He wrote to the following effect: first of all, he said, he had heard of me and obtained my address from a friend of mine who had sailed a few months before for Lima, but whose ship had been obliged to put into Rio to repair some damage she had sustained in a heavy gale off Cape Agostino. He had a long story to relate about his misfortunes in India, how he had been villainously deceived in the character of his associate and almost ruined by him, and how,

as he had no wish to die of starvation, he had shipped as a foremast hand aboard a Yankee vessel, from which he ran on her arrival at Pernambuco—where he fell in with a sugar-grower belonging to Rio, who offered him a good berth on his estate in the neighbourhood of that town. He had not been long settled when he made the acquaintance of a Mr. and Mrs. Grant, with whose only daughter, Aurelia, he immediately fell in love. Mr. Grant was a Scotchman who had married a Spanish lady of noble birth, and their daughter, Fraser went on to say, was the most majestic, stately, and beautiful woman that ever walked the earth. The parents consented to their betrothal, but objected to the marriage until Fraser was in a condition to support a wife in comfort. One night, very suddenly, Mrs. Grant died. Her husband, who adored her, found her dead at his side, and the shock was so great that both his health and his mind gave way. He declared that he could not support life in a town where every object which met his eye reminded him of his loss; and within a month of Mrs. Grant's death he broke up his home and sailed with

Aurelia for England. Fraser added that folks at Rio spoke of Mr. Grant as a well-to-do man, and talked of Aurelia as an heiress ; but the truth came out when he was gone, and it was then understood that so far from being rich he had just contrived to come to a stand within a few fathoms of the brink of insolvency.

The lovers of course agreed to write by every ship. Fraser was cocksure of being able to support a wife before another year had run out, and it was settled that he was to send for or fetch her at the expiration of the twelvemonth, as there was not the least likelihood of Mr. Grant returning to Rio.

Eight months after the arrival of the girl in England the father died. She wrote to acquaint Fraser with her loss, and hinted quite enough to intimate that she was not only friendless in London, but in poverty. "And now," continued my cousin, "I want you, who were as a brother to me when we were together at sea, to stand me in a brother's stead again in about as trying and perplexing a passage as ever formed part of a man's life. The business I have charge of is so tender, it needs such cherishing, such per-

sistent personal attention, that I am persuaded were I to let go of it to fetch Aurelia I should return to find myself bankrupt. The population of Rio comprises a great number of rogues, and though the people I employ are not worse than the rest, they are rascals nevertheless, and I make no doubt whatever that if I were to turn my back upon them for three months they would ruin me. Now, my dear Dick, this is what you will do for me : you will call upon Aurelia"—here came in the address—"advance whatever money she may require, engage a cabin for her in the next ship that sails for Rio, furnish her with all such delicacies and comforts as your seafaring experiences, backed by a fastidious appetite, will suggest, and then, all this being done, *accompany her yourself*. You start ! But, my dear boy, you will do this ! ay, indeed you will ; for d'ye see, you *must*, Dick. You will need but glance at her to perceive instantaneously that she cannot be suffered to embark alone. And consider how happy it will make her, thrown as she must needs be into the company, not of *our* polished glittering species—the sparkling dandies of John Company—but of men with

faces like walnut-shells, with voices hoarse and raw with hard drinking, whose language is thickened and stiffened with horrid objectionable words—how happy, I say, it will make her to feel that she has the protection of her sweetheart's own cousin, a man of muscle and nerve, who can tell the toughest salt of them all where the flying-jibboom ends and how many gudgeons a liner's rudder hangs on ! Consider the ease of mind that I shall enjoy through knowing that you are at her side. Consider again the prodigious delight it will give me to meet you—to thank you—to entertain you—to yarn with you over the past and hearken to the home news you will bring with you. No excuse, as you love me ! You *must* come, d'ye see, Dick. Yes, you must absolutely accompany my poor lonely darling girl. You are an idle man, you know ; your friend told me you were unmarried when he last saw you, and I have a right to believe, as I certainly hope, that you are single at this minute of reading my letter. The voyage is a pleasant one. Once clear of the Bay, 'tis no more than the pleasant fanning of the north-east trade-wind, with a brief instructive

halt on the equator for a glance at John Sharkee and the pretty little flying fishes, and then a delightful run to the noblest bit of scenery the wide world over. Reflect a little upon your health and you are sure to discover that a change of air will do you good. And name me an air sweeter than the ocean breeze! Besides, you were never in South America, and cannot therefore imagine the delights in store for you in the shape of the rivers, the mountains, the shining flowers and exquisite fruits of this grand continent, or at all events of that part of it to which I invite you."

And so the letter went on, terminating in a whole jumble of exhortations to me to come—to squire his sweetheart—to behold from the summit of the regal Corcovado the magnificent harbour, the sparkling city, the green country beyond aflame with coloured growths. . . .

It was a letter to set me pacing the room. The voyage was a considerable one; and though I had gone to sea for love of ships when I was a boy, a very few months sufficed to break the spell, and I had long ceased, as I believed, to be sensible of any sort of oceanic influence. I

sat down, filled a pipe, and entered into certain calculations. I reckoned that a tolerably true course to Rio from the Thames would come hard upon five thousand nautical miles, and as it was hopeless to expect that any British South American trader would average more than one hundred and fifty knots in the twenty-four hours, I judged that though all conditions should prove favourable, the outward passage alone would run me into five or six weeks. Then of course I should have to return, so that I must look upon the round voyage as promising me three solid months, at least, upon a bosom that had ceased to rock me for some years. The first movement of my mind was one of recoil ; but after turning the project over I got to think that, after all, the voyage would prove a complete and healthy change, inexpensive too, and much less troublesome than a trip across the Channel. Possibly the old instincts which had driven me to sea as a lad, and which I had thought dead long ago, lived still, and were now faintly stirring to sudden visions of frothing billows, of the small green moon shearing like a cannon-ball through the flying scud, of the star-touched

well rolling in dark folds silently, of the tropic shore that sweetens the warm breath of the languid breeze with the odours of spices and the perfume of a nameless vegetation. London was hot and dull ; the seaside tedious and commonplace. My excursions abroad formed no genial memories, for in —— I nearly died of fever at Brussels, and in —— lay ill of a poisonous smell for close upon a month at Florence. Besides, my cousin pleaded to me as a brother and a sailor, and I knew him well enough to feel certain that if he were in my place he would do me this service.

But what sort of a girl was this Miss Aurelia Grant ? My cousin expressed her perfections in the impassioned language of love, and he might possibly be very right in all he said ; but I remember a man who had passed some years in Spain, and who knew the Spanish character well, telling me that he took particular notice there was a deal of the mule mixed up in the disposition of the women of that country—a quality, as he described it, of bland and even polite obstinacy, that was however very easily excited into a most unpleasant, clamorous,

peevish stubbornness. Miss Aurelia was indeed half English ; but suppose the other half of her was not to my taste ? I do protest on my word that I would rather go to jail for a fortnight than be locked up in a ship for a month with a disagreeable woman. Thus I sat debating ; but though I was some distance on the road towards forming a resolution, I cannot say that I had at all made up my mind when I went to bed.

CHAPTER II.

MISS AURELIA GRANT.

NEXT morning I dressed myself with more care than I usually took in this way, though twenty-six years old and not without self-complacency in some respects, and about eleven o'clock drove to the address given me by Fraser.

I found the house in a dull and dingy street out of the Edgware Road. Miss Grant was at home. I sent up my name, and was shown into a little front parlour, gloomy with sallow drapery and the bilious atmosphere peculiar to this part of the metropolis. In a few minutes she entered, and I must confess I sprang rather than rose to my feet, so surprised was I by the girl's beauty and deportment. I had indeed conjectured a tall figure in conformity with my

cousin's description ; but imagination had not gone beyond that, with a pair of dark eyes and an upper lip shaded with down.

Now Miss Aurelia Grant had as fair and delicate a complexion as any that ever I witnessed in the most matchless English-woman's face. Her hair was brown, very plentiful, thick and soft, and it had a kind of light of its own upon it as though dusted with gold. Her eyes were black—profoundly so : Spanish eyes in passion and power and meaning, but subdued to an expression of beauty by, as I took it, the English heart in her, that rendered them remarkable beyond my capacity of expression. Her figure was extremely fine, full yet girlish too. She was dressed in mourning, and as she stood looking at me a moment or two in the doorway, I said to myself, This is the handsomest creature I have ever seen !

There was a little blush on her cheeks that brightened the light in her eyes : she smiled and gave me her hand.

“ I am indeed glad to see you, Mr. Musgrave. Alexander has talked of you to me again and

again. In a letter I received from him yesterday he told me you would call. You are very good to come so soon."

"I shall be truly rejoiced if I can be of service to you," said I, still a trifle confused; "my cousin's description of you—eloquent as his devotion would naturally make him"—here I fumbled for the letter,—“would—perhaps, madam” (we madam'd the ladies in those days of high coat-collars, splendid waistcoats and immense breast-pins), “you would like to read it.”

She took it eagerly, and her eyes grew so fond as she read, whilst a look so yearning entered her face—such an expression as the memory of her loneliness might put into her when she should meet her sweetheart again after their long separation—that I felt I acted sneakishly in watching her. She smiled happily when she came to the part in which Fraser spoke of her beauty, and when she had made an end she folded the letter carefully as though it were something precious, and pressed it between her hands as if it was her sweetheart's own fingers she held.

It seemed to me as I surveyed her that my cousin exhibited uncommon courage in confiding so much beauty as this to the care and attention of a man whom he knew to be young and single, to say no more, for a spell of ship-board that might last for two or even three months. Our eyes met : her colour deepened somewhat, but her brilliant gaze was as steady as the shining of a star. There was a singularly engaging, most unaffected quality or tone of frankness in her voice.

"Alexander has asked you to do him a great favour. It is really *too* great." I seemed to dissent. "It is positively enough, Mr. Musgrave, that you should hire a cabin for me. To make the voyage also ! And yet I know he would be overjoyed to see you. Still it is a tedious journey, and if you are like Alexander you detest the sea."

"No," said I, "I believe I shall enjoy a few weeks on the ocean. The fact is, madam, I want time to realize the thing, so to speak—not to understand it, for of course it is intelligible enough, but to accustom my thoughts to it, you know ;" and here I coughed and brought myself

up "all standing" as sailors say, for indeed there was something in her shining steadfast gaze that caused me to talk as though I was ill at ease.

"Should you decide to be my companion, Mr. Musgrave," said she, "the voyage will be something to look forward to, greatly as I dislike the sea, or rather existence on board ship." I bowed. "But you will not dream of doing more than securing a cabin for me and helping me in one or two other ways,—if you have the least reluctance. It is quite possible that I may find a pleasant companion among the passengers—if there should be ladies on board. As a rule the captains and mates of the ships that trade to South America are a very rough and rude set of men. Should I be the only passenger, it is natural," she said, with a little droop of the head, "that I should not choose to be alone in such society."

This was like an appeal in its way, and her manner of speaking rendered it irresistible. Besides, there was Fraser's letter calling upon me to protect her, imploring me as one who was as a brother to do him this great service,

and these considerations coming on top of my concern for her loneliness and helplessness, my sympathy with her in the grief that was still recent, and above all the perception that she desired my company, and that I should be acting unchivalrously to refuse her, made me whip out, "Miss Grant, it is settled. We sail together. There is nothing to keep me ashore. It will be delightful to meet Fraser again, and I shall find immense satisfaction in feeling that my enjoyment of your society also includes the pleasure of obliging you."

She clapped her hands with a gesture that was like telling you she had something besides English blood in her.

"How good you are! How glad you make me, Mr. Musgrave! I wonder what kind of ship we shall sail in?" she cried, with the vivacity of a mind that has suddenly lost its burden. "She must prove swift! She cannot sail too fast for me!" and here she told me of the vessel in which she and her father had made the voyage home—a clumsy, round-bowed polacca, apparently, that stirred to nothing less than half a gale of wind, and so

leaky that the crew were at the pumps for fourteen hours out of the twenty-four ; with a bow-legged, beef-faced old swab for captain, whose favourite boast was that he had once swallowed at a draught a bowl of punch containing ten half-pints of rum, whiskey, brandy and water. She described this man and his habits with so much humour as to give me a high opinion of her talent as an observer ; and she made me laugh heartily by an account of a quarrel between him and his mate over a pudding—the latter (an Irishman) beginning it by swearing that he had seen dried currants and raisins growing naturally like capers on trees, and the captain ending it by grasping a lump of the hot and steaming stuff and flinging it plump into the mate's face. Maybe something of the merriment of the tale and her delivery of it lay to my mind in the contrast between the rough sea-anecdote and the dignity, refinement, and beauty of the speaker. But I confess I liked her the better for her archness, and for her easy recital of a story which Miss Prim would consider rather vulgar since it referred to such *very* common people.

Our conversation presently went to her father. He died in the house in which she was still lodging, and she declared that when, after the funeral, she sat down to reflect she did not know what in the world she should do. She had not a friend in England, and of her mother's relatives in Spain she knew nothing. The few pounds her father had left were fast giving out, and she frankly told me that the money she still had would not have carried her on another month. "Why did you not call upon me?" I asked her. But it seems that Fraser had omitted to give my address in the last letter but one he sent to her, and it was only a week or two before he wrote that he had learnt it from my friend whose ship had been forced into Rio.

I was with her for two hours, and never did time pass more pleasantly and quickly. We arranged that I should call for her next day and accompany her to the shops she had occasion to visit, and afterwards make inquiries about the next ship and start on all the necessary preparations for the voyage. She cried when she said good-bye to me. Indeed she had suffered grievously, and now that the darkness was

passing she could not meet the first of the dawn without tears.

As to myself, I hardly knew whether my resolution made me glad or sorry when I came to turn it over. The girl was exceeding handsome, but then she was not *my* sweetheart. Had her heart been her own a voyage with her must have yielded me a prospect that could not have left me doubting whether I was right in this adventure. But as my cousin's betrothed she was the same to me as if she was his wife. There was no room for sentiment. I was young enough to take this into consideration, and I say, when I reflected upon my determination, I could not satisfy myself that my judgment was as brilliant as my heroism.

On the following morning I called at her lodgings and afterwards passed some hours in watching her whilst she shopped and in paying for her purchases. There was a dignified frankness about her that was very fascinating, and not the less so because it was tinged with melancholy. Her fine eyes expressed so much spirit, there was so much power in the curve and set of her lips, such suggestion of self-

reliance in the peculiar floating pose of her head, I felt persuaded that a very great deal of the heroine went to her composition, that she was a woman whose qualities would best discover themselves in a time of extremity, a person by nature so ardent that no theory about her could touch the limits of the romantic exploits she was equal to in the service of the man she loved. These were my thoughts as I sat watching her whilst she handled the stuffs the shopmen put before her, frequently turning to me to speak, when I would notice that every sudden confrontment of her full beauty surprised me as a fresh revelation.

She managed to buy all she needed in one day, which I thought very clever and very kind also. "How long," said I, "will it take you to prepare for the voyage?"

"Oh," she answered, "if you were to tell me the ship sails to-morrow I should be quite ready."

I told her that I would devote the next day to making inquiries and arrangements, and would do myself the pleasure to call in the evening and let her know what I had done.

“At all events,” said I, “you would wish me to book ourselves for the next ship?”

“If you please,” she answered with anxiety.

“In which case,” I observed, “we must not be fastidious. The best procurable cabins will satisfy us, and the skipper’s appearance need not count. Yet it will not do to sail away in a vessel whose seams yawn and whose hold has been abandoned by the rats. I have some small knowledge of ships, and if the first that offers is not as she should be we must wait for the next.”

“I will leave everything to you,” she said, “only,” looking around with a slight shudder—we were conversing in her lodgings—“I am so very weary of this gloomy house, this dull street; so longing to see my dear one again, and the bright sun and the flowers of my own home.”

“I will do my best,” I exclaimed; “there should be and perhaps will be a choice of ships. If we have to wait, you will suffer me to find you pleasanter quarters.”

And with that I bade her good-bye and left her.

CHAPTER III.

THE IRON CROWN.

IN those days a large number of vessels bound to all parts of the world loaded in the Pool, a little way below London Bridge. Steam then was young, and not much was made of it. I have lived to see steamers trading to South America big enough to stow away in their holds many of the sailing vessels which were then carrying goods and passengers to all parts of the world. It is difficult in this age to realize the kind of experiences our forefathers suffered when they took ship—it mattered little to what countries—if it were not the ports to which the Indiamen were despatched. I have heard my mother say that in her young days country people who proposed a trip to London would make their wills before entering the

coach. I do not know that the coach was much more dangerous than the locomotive, but I am certain that there were no limits to the perils which menace the ocean-borne traveller in the time of the little passenger-ship and smaller passenger-brig ; when the sailor was still an exceeding rough son of a gun, charged to the throat with the traditional infirmities of his calling ; when no special qualifications were insisted upon as conditions of a man taking charge of a vessel ; when ships sailed without side-lights, and when collisions were averted by the easy remedy of whipping the lamp out of the binnacle and flourishing it over the rail ; when the cabin provisions were only a little less coarse than the fore-castle fare, and when a passage that is now made in a week occupied two or three months.

I had obtained the addresses of a few brokers and owners in the South American trade, hoping thus to find two or three ships proceeding much about the same time, but it turned out that the first vessel on the berth sailed next day and that her cabin accommodation was full. Her name, I remember, was the Amazon. The

next vessel, a brig named the Iron Crown, did not sail until the 23rd, so that even if she satisfied me we should have to wait eight days. The office of the owner of this craft was in Tower Hill, and whilst I was inquiring about her cabin accommodation the person to whom I was speaking, motioning towards a man who had entered a moment before, exclaimed :

“ Here is the master himself, sir, Captain Guy Broadwater, and he will tell you that a stouter, swifter, more comfortable ship than the Iron Crown never sailed out of an English port. Captain, you will confirm me. What is it now,” inclining his head and screwing up one eye as if in thought, “on a bowline with you? A cool thirteen, I believe? Indeed,” he cried, chafing his hands and grinning, “we may safely consider the good ship Iron Crown the one favourite trader between Rio and the Thames.”

“ Well,” said Captain Broadwater in the hoarse voice of a man who has broken his pipes by rum and years of bawling aloft in gales, “it isn’t for me to praise the Iron Crown, sir. She can speak for herself. She only needs to know that a man’s eye is upon her to talk out.

Handsome! Well I knew old Jarge Rowley who laid her keel, and always reckoned him a man without the least flavey of sentiment in his intellectuals until this here Iron Crown was launched and lay floating, and then I says to myself, 'Broadwater,' I says, 'swaller your own precious eyes, mate, if Jarge ain't a poet!'"

"You hear what the captain says, sir?" cried the other continuing to chafe his hands.

I took a short survey of Captain Guy Broadwater, and there stood before me a wide-shouldered, exceedingly muscular man of fifty, short, with iron-gray hair and a beard that hung like a bush at his throat, the chin being shaved. He had the smallest eyes I ever saw, and their colour as I now took stock of them seemed red, but I afterwards discovered that this was due to congestion caused by rheumatism, or punch, or both. His nose was of the exact shape of a pear, and being purple at the nostrils and point, looked as if it had been lately stung by a bee. His mouth on the other hand was so small as to correspond, as a deformity, with his eyes. When he was not speaking he seemed from the posture of his lips to be trying, but in vain, to whistle. The

skin of his face was much burnt by the weather, and it was adorned with a strange subcutaneous filigree-work, or net rather let me term it, of dusky crimson meshes. He was dressed in pilot-cloth, and carried in his hand a bell-shaped beaver, the brim of which was large enough to furnish out a bishop. Yet ugly and queer as he was, there was nothing whatever in his appearance to offend or prejudice me. I put him down at once as a coarse, unlettered, but good-natured sailor of the hearty lively type, whose physical peculiarities were to a certain extent to be attributed to bad victuals in early life, to too much liquor later on, and throughout to the rough usage of the vocation of the sea when followed before the mast. I told him that I was glad to make his acquaintance, and that I had called with the intention of taking a passage in his ship, though I would not decide until I had inspected her.

“Sir,” said he, “I am going aboard myself when I have done my business with this gentleman, and if you don’t mind lettin’ go your anchor here for five minutes I’ll carry ye straight to the vessel.”

They withdrew to an inner office where I could hear the growling voice of my captain mingling with the sharp-edged tones of his owner as though there was a mastiff and a pug tumbling and larking behind the door.

The skipper presently emerged and put on his broad-brimmed hat, in which he made so strange a figure that I could scarce forbear a laugh. We walked to the river and were rowed to a brig that was moored in mid-stream.

“Here she is!” cried Captain Broadwater; “look at her, sir! Was there ever beautifuller lines! Observe the lovely swell of the side! It might be the breast of a duck, sir. Mark how clean she comes to the starn-post. In my opinion she’s too good to use; she’s properer for a show.”

There is no reason why he should not have been in earnest, for, as her master, it was conceivable that he should be proud of her. For my part however I could find no hint of the charms which threw him into raptures. The vessel was a stout brig of three hundred tons, an excellent sea-boat, no doubt, with the

scantling of a line-of-battle ship, but she was certainly no beauty. She was painted black, with a narrow yellow streak running the length of her sides, and had been newly coppered to the bends; the lustre of the bright metal was under her, and she seemed to float in a little surface of pale sunshine. She was loftily rigged for a craft of her size and carried exceedingly square yards, whence I inferred that with her studding sails abroad she could expand canvas enough in a breeze of wind to start an island from its moorings. We gained the side, climbed up a stout rope-ladder and jumped aboard.

There was a lighter on the starboard bow and a number of intoxicated lumpers were hoisting in cargo. It should have been no new scene to me, yet I found it confusing enough. The sails were unbent, and the running rigging unrove, so there were no ropes' ends to trip over. Nevertheless the decks were encumbered with all sorts of "raffle," as sailors term lumber—casks, hencoops, sacks, planks, and I know not what else besides. There was a full-rigged ship a short distance off getting her anchor, and the fellows at the

windlass were roaring out with hurricane lungs one of the many working songs with which the British seaman inspires his heart and nerves, his hands and legs. The melody awoke echoes long ago silent in me. It was at Cape Town that I had heard it last, and the rough salt air brought the picture before me in a vision so clear, sunbright, real—the blue waters of the wide haven, the groups of ivory-white houses upon the low shore, the polished azure back of the huge Atlantic comber poising its arched summit in a ridge of glassy opal light for a breath ere thundering its burthen of snow upon the beach, the great mountains beyond with streaks of lace-like mist crawling along their brows, as though the viewless spirits of the blue atmosphere up there were spinning a white fabric of exquisite delicacy out of their airy looms for the adornment of those giants' heads—that I seemed to waken with a start to Captain Broadwater's invitation to step below and view the cabin.

One hears of the Swiss weeping when some one tunes up their national cow-strain. Mariners are a people who have no tears

to spare: what they possess in that way they devote to their private woes; but I do think nothing so stirs a man who has been a sailor as the melody of a forecastle chorus. 'Tis like the wand of a wizard: the curtain rises to it and there before you lies the past—the rolling ocean, the gallant fabric in whose heart you scoured your thousand leagues of sea, your hearty shipmates, the gay Saturday carousal, the girl in the distant home from whose sunny head you snicked the golden wisp, which many a time you have pressed to your lips in some mid-ocean solitude, when there was nobody but the man in the moon and the man at the wheel to see what you were at.

“I have been a sailor myself, captain,” said I, as I followed him to the companion-hatch: “and the sound of that stormy chorus out yonder makes me feel a bit swabbish, do you know, for quitting the old life.”

“Bin a sailor yourself, hey?” he cried, rounding when at the bottom of the ladder to take a view of me. “Well, an’ I dessay it did ye no harm. There’s worse people

knocking about the world than sailors, though I haven't much respect for that class of 'em which goes by the name of Hands."

"I see. Your sympathies are aft."

"Well, I don't know about that either," he exclaimed rather warmly, as though he objected to my considering that he had any sympathies at all, and methought that his pear-shaped nose as he spoke took a deeper dye; then with a flourish of the arm he said, "This here's the cabin. A noble room, sir. Must board the Indiamen to find the like of it."

The vessel had so much beam that her cabin was larger than I had expected to find it. The furniture was simple enough: a table, lockers for seats, snuff-coloured bulkheads without any sort of ornamentation. At the after end were four cabins, two of a side, whilst forward were other but smaller berths.

"That end's for the passengers," said the captain, pointing aft.

I inspected the accommodation and found it airy and roomy.

"Which are to let?" I asked.

“All,” he replied; “how many of you are there, sir?”

“Myself and a lady.”

“I reckon there’ll be no more then,” said he. “Here’s four beautiful bedrooms to choose from.”

“Where do *you* sleep?”

“Forwards there,” said he, pointing with his nose as a negro does with his chin. “Mean’ my first mate lodges there. The bo’sun who sarves as second mate lies in the fo’k’sle. There’s no interference. You’ll be as private as a chick in its egg. Case of more coming I’d take the two foremost berths, if I was you. The helm don’t feel to kick so much there, and if the chap at the wheel should warm his toes by stamping you won’t hear him plain.”

I should have been better pleased with a vessel of twice the burthen of this craft; but then to be sure we should start in the height of the summer when the Bay of Biscay is least formidable—though let me remember that the heaviest gale I was ever in was fifty miles south of Ushant in the month of July—and once clear of those waters we had a right to

look for quiet weather during the rest of the passage. The short chat I had with Broadwater on returning on deck confirmed my first impression of him: he was indeed no very polished companion for ladies, but he was well enough as sea-captains of his class and in his trade then went. I was not surprised to find that the vessel did not carry a stewardess. You had to look to the height of the Indiamen in those days for luxuries of this kind. I asked him what sort of table he kept.

"An A 1 copper-bottom table," he answered. "Salt beef of the primest—roast pork—poultry twice a week—currant dumplings—taking it all round, a list nigh as long as my arm."

"Pretty substantial," I exclaimed.

"Ay," said he, grinning, "there's never no twopenny kickshaws to be found aboard of *me*. No hishee-hashees here, sir, with French names. All's good solid eating,—dishes which makes a man feel that he's dined when he gets up. Give me food that'll coil a chap's appetite down for him. That's why, to my

notion, there's ne'er a bit of vittles on this airth to beat a good leg o' roast pork."

I gathered from these observations that Miss Grant and I were not likely to be invariably entertained to our tastes, and that it would therefore be necessary to lay in a stock of wines and stores for our separate use; and having ascertained that I was at liberty to fill one of the hencoops with poultry for ourselves, and that if the other cabins were unlet one of them was at my service as a larder, I took leave of him, and was rowed ashore, and without further ado walked to Tower Hill and engaged two berths in the brig *Iron Crown*, Broadwater master. Also, at this office, to save time, I wrote a letter to my cousin, in which I named the vessel we were to sail in and the date of our departure, and handed it to the owner of the *Iron Crown* to transmit with despatches of his own to Rio by the ship *Amazon* proceeding next day.

CHAPTER IV.

WE EMBARK.

As the brig did not sail for another week, and as we intended to join her at Deal, which would give us two or three days ashore beyond the date of our departure from the Thames, I procured rooms for Miss Grant in a private hotel near Bond Street, so that I was within convenient reach and saw much of her. In truth the poverty and melancholy of the street in which she had lodged rendered the very name of it intolerable to her, and the gloomy influence of the house upon her spirits was made more oppressive yet by the recollection of her father's sufferings and death and her own privation in it.

The change from such lodgings to the comforts of a hotel, the sudden removal from

her mind of the distracting burthen of poverty and anxiety, the feeling that I was by her side and that she had a protector in me, and that in a few weeks she would be with her sweetheart and married to him, combined to make another woman of her in those eight or ten days. Her eyes shone with a clearer light, and their dark luminous depths gathered a softness beyond description from the happiness that was in her. A delicate bloom lay upon her cheeks, her laugh was sincere, her smiles full of an honest gaiety. As we walked together I would notice that both men and women stopped to stare after her. I remember an old dandy with his hat cocked and a tuft on his chin, coming to a dead stand on seeing her, then following us and passing as an excuse to turn again to have another look. I will not say that she was insensible to the admiration she excited—she would have been no true woman to feign such a thing—but I cannot conceive that any girl could have shown herself less affected by it.

We took the coach for Deal early on a Friday morning. The journey was long and

tedious. It was after sunset when we sat down to the dinner I had ordered in a quaint hotel that looked directly upon the sea ; but the moon rode high, clear as crystal in the dark blue air, and her glorious reflection came to the very margin of the beach, upon whose shingle the rippling summer breakers trembled into snow in a fan-shaped path of glory that floated as steadily upon the quiet surface as the orb herself in the breathless sky.

After dinner we walked to the esplanade. The luggers lying high and dry looked hoary in the clear and icy light : the seaward-gazing windows sparkled out to the gush of the radiance in silver stars ; every shadow lay like an ebony carving upon a sand-white ground. Far away, past the yellow winking spots of the signal lanterns floating off the Goodwins, was the fitful flashing of violet lightning. The planets hung large and burnt richly, and, clear of the sphere of mist-like radiance that circled the moon, the stars shone in such numbers that I never remember witnessing the heavens so crowded. After the roaring of metropolitan streets, the low wash-

ing sound of the surf along the coast was inexpressibly soothing and refreshing, and one's blood coursed to the cool sweetness of the ocean atmosphere as to a draught of rare and generous cordial.

There were many ships in the Downs, wan and spectral in the moonshine. Their riding-lights resembled a swarm of fire-flies. By bending the ear you caught from the nearer vessels the sounds of laughter, the thin strains of a concertina, the clank of a chain cable dragged along the deck; or from the further distance the faint chorusing of a crew pulling and hauling aboard some hidden craft that had softly sneaked into the Downs on the top of the subtle tide.

"Which amid that ashen muddle of ships out yonder will be ours, I wonder?" said I.

"How ghostly is the atmosphere that is made by moonlight at sea!" exclaimed Miss Grant, sending her glance along the shining wake of the luminary, and then looking into the eastern darkness and talking as if she spoke to herself. "It must be the low-lying stars, I think, which cause the distance to appear so

terribly remote. The beauty of such a night as this used to awe me when we were coming to England—it does so now, though I am on dry land. It should be as lovely to me as to others, but it is not so. The mystery of it is too great—the mystery of the silence and the pale air and the whispering of the sea along the shore.”

“It may be that what is mysterious cannot be beautiful,” said I, finding talk of this sort a little above my art, though not wanting her to think that I did not understand her either. “Yet I don’t know. I have seen eyes in my time as secret as the dark sea yonder, and they were wonderfully beautiful, I assure you.”

As I said this a rumbling voice close behind me exclaimed, “Bort, sir! beautiful noight for a row, sir! Water smooth as satin, lady.”

I turned and observed a Deal boatman.

“No—we shall have enough of the sea presently. Can you tell me if a vessel named the Iron Crown has brought up off here?”

“What’s she loike?” he asked.

“A brig,” I said, “three hundred tons, newly sheathed, painted black with a yellow stripe.”

“ Is her capt’n a man with werry small eyes an’ a nose like a sailor’s duff? ”

“ That’s right.”

“ Then she brought up just afore sundown. Oi was off fishin’ with a party at the time, and the chap Oi’ve described sung out to me to git out of the road ; ” and he pointed seawards with a shadowy hand, but it was impossible to distinguish any one ship among the congregation there. He hung about me a little as though he would engage me in further conversation, and then said, “ Werry thirsty weather, sir.” I gave him the value of a glass of ale and he left us.

“ At the head of human disenchanters,” said I, “ stands the British long-shoreman, with his cry of ‘ Bort, sir.’ ”

“ Hark ! ” exclaimed my companion lifting her finger.

It was half-past nine, and the bells out upon the water were sounding the hour. There were probably two hundred sail in the Downs ; the tinkling ran in ripples as though a wave of air raised scores of metallic echoes of different tones as it swept onwards. Some of

the bells sounded simultaneously ; some followed one another in chimes ; a few were mellow, many shrill, more yet of a silver singing cadence. From the pallid remoteness the tones came in faint and tiny sounds, after which fell the silence, and you heard nothing but the fountain-like seething of foam upon the shingle.

We returned to the hotel, but I lingered, after Miss Grant had retired, for a long hour upon the balcony overlooking the sea, smoking a cigar and musing much on the girl and my cousin Fraser and the voyage on which we should probably start next day. The moon hung over the Downs, and through the steady rain of her silver twinkled the yellow sparks of the ships' lights. There was a lugger heading for Deal and coming fair down the middle of the ice-like path upon the waters. She floated black against the tremulous shining that went up behind her to the sea-line, and as you marked her sweeps or long oars rising and falling you would have imagined her some gigantic marine insect stealthily creeping shorewards. From every lifted blade the water dripped to the moonshine in diamonds, and the *cheep, cheep*

of the oars grinding betwixt the thole-pins sent the fancy roaming to the tropic swamp and to the mysterious croakings of the tree-toad.

I was up betimes, but Miss Aurelia was before me. She looked as fresh and as fragrant as Cowper's rose newly washed by a shower.

"The sea," said I, "promises to use you kindly."

"Yes, and I feel well, too, which is better than looking so."

She was robed in black, her dress fitted her excellently, her hair was coiled into the likeness of a crown, her dark eyes were full of fire and life. I did not much like to think of her as being obliged to sit and converse with such a man as Broadwater and with such people as his mates were tolerably certain to prove. But it could not be helped; though when the captain's purple face came into my head I felt that I should have been ungenerous and mean indeed to have suffered her to sail alone. There was a light breeze from the southward. The upward-bound vessels had got under way, and the picture was gay and brilliant with the crowded white canvas of the numerous craft,

the sparkling of the sun in the running waters, the fitful flashings of the wet oars of boats, the light blue sky with a stretch of ivory-like crescents of clouds, resembling new moons linked and compacted going down to the sea-line, where a leaning sail or two gleamed like little obelisks of Parian marble. Miss Grant came to my side and we stood gazing together. Presently a waiter arrived, asked if my name was Musgrave, and said there was a gentleman inquiring for me. A moment or two afterwards Captain Broadwater entered.

He gave Miss Grant a bow that was a sheer convulsion in its way, and said, "I thought I'd look in here, sir, afore I went aboard. There'll be nothing to keep us when you and the lady are over the side. There's not much weight in this here wind, but the tide sarves, and I'm never for waiting when there's a chance to get away."

"You are very right," said I; "but we haven't breakfasted yet, captain. There's time enough for that, I hope?" And thinking he was going to object, I added, "You'll join us? Nothing like shore-going food and cooking down to the last moment."

He answered that he had already breakfasted, but that on reflection he felt himself equal to another meal, and the waiter arriving with the ham and coffee we sat down. I have seen men with immense appetites in my day, but no man who ever came near to Broadwater in this way. It was not only the quantity he devoured ; it was the rapidity with which he ate. He took a hot roll, tore the crumb out, buttered and then bolted the whole without winking and in a breath. He picked up an egg-spoon, and after inspecting it an instant, called the waiter and asked him what it was. The waiter explained. "Bring me a proper spoon !" he roared in a voice that caused Miss Grant to start and glance at me with a little air of consternation. The man handed him a dessert-spoon, with which he struck the egg as though it had been a sailor's head, then scooped out the inside and swallowed the whole, afterwards seizing another egg, all so quickly that it was like watching the performance of a conjuror. He never offered to speak a word until he had eaten as much breakfast as would have sufficed me for a week, though he made an end before Miss Grant and

I had fairly begun. My companion looked at me as if she would say, "I told you what sort of people the captains are in this trade;" I was more struck however by his manner of roaring to the waiter than by the rest of his behaviour. "If this is not a ship's bully all of the olden time," I thought to myself, "let his appetite be called delicate."

He now began to tell me in a hoarse voice about his passage down the river to the Downs, and how a West Indiaman in bringing up at midnight had fouled his cable and nearly run aboard him. "But," said he, "there's no seamanship to be expected from the men who gets command of them big ships. They're hired for their faces and their tricks of speechifying and caper-cutting and grinning out answers without losing their tempers when the ladies bother 'em with questions. Put them into a situation that requires real nautical knowledge and they can only stand and look on. If you want to be cut down, or your spars brought about your ears, them's the gents to show ye how it's done."

All this was very pig-headed talk ; but if he

should prove, as I suspected, full of salt prejudices and antique sea-notions, I at all events should not be without one favourite source of diversion during the voyage.

Our baggage was on board the brig. The little we had with us was conveyed to one of the vessel's boats that was lying off the beach waiting for the captain. Miss Grant sprang to the gunwale and thence to a thwart with inimitable grace that was full of a generous disdain of the extended hand of one of the seamen. I followed, and Broadwater bundled in after me. "Shove off!" he bawled as though in a passion. The boat's head was slewed for the brig, and the three men fell to their oars.

There were fifty things to admire as our little keel was swept forwards: the gray bald stare of the Foreland point with the sheen of the chalk trembling off it upon the blue atmosphere beyond; the ships still at anchor growing large to our approach, their glossy sides twinkling to the rippling lustre in the water like the tremble of sunlight amid the shadows of dancing leaves; the sudden flash of a cabin-window to the movement of the hull as though a cannon

had been fired from it ; the various colours and devices of a dozen different nations' ensigns languidly fluttering their bright folds from mast-head and peak ; the line of green and yellow coast sweeping into an airy dimness of pallid cliff as wan in the distance of the brilliant north as the crescent of the moon floating in the noon-tide heavens ; the quaint aspect of the hearty old smuggling town whose foreground of brown shingle gleamed black to the recoil of the washing breaker, whilst it offered the saltiest imaginable picture in the shape of fleets of yellow luggers high and dry, and the figures of boatmen lounging, scrubbing, mending nets, and boiling pitch-pots.

There were plenty of things, I say, to look at, yet I do not remember that I took notice of much outside the three men who were rowing us to the brig. They belonged of course to the ship's company. One was a half-blood of a dark olive complexion and eyes like sloes resting on slices of lemon. His hands were as small as a girl's, beautifully shaped, though corned and horny and palm-blackened by the tar and drudgery of shipboard. The others

were plain ginger-haired British lobsousers—one with a beard of stubble that projected from his chin like the thatch of a sou'-wester, both knob-nosed and rugged as the shell of a walnut. Their feet were naked, their rough breasts lay bare to the light, their nervous muscular arms were decorated with bracelets, crucifixes, anchors, female figures, pricked in with the pale blue of the sailor's pigment. All three of them wore a sullen look—not the expression of evil-minded men, but of persons rendered sulky and resentful by ill-usage. I saw the half-blood glance at Miss Grant, and a sort of light broke upon his face and swept the dogged air out of it as a smile clears a sour brow; but his eye instantly went from her to Broadwater and fell, a singular look of loathing and hate darkened his countenance, and I witnessed the impulse of a violent emotion in him in the quick, savage swing he gave his oar. It was like a curse!

Here were tokens not to please me who, as a man that had passed some years at sea, had preserved an eye for the interpretation of sailors' meanings. If the crew were dissatisfied at this early stage, then old Broadwater and his

mates must have gone to work with an incredible promptitude to make their true characters known to them. Had they a grievance? Their provisions would have been fresh meat and loaves of bread down to this point, and they could not therefore know what the forecastle stores were like. Was the vessel leaky? It was to be hoped she was not. No! it could be nothing less than Broadwater. Well, if the men were growling now, what would be their posture later on? I was sufficiently well acquainted with the character of merchant seamen to know that often the very best sailors amongst them are those who curse the deepest in their gizzards. I was also aware that there was nothing uncommon in a crew finding plenty of time and excuses to mutiny in a run from Blackwall to the Forelands, going ashore with bag and baggage in a body, and obliging the ship to wait off Deal until the crimps could roll a new crew into her forecastle. All this was, as it still is, in the ordinary course of the ocean life. But the looks of the three thinly-clad fellows made you think of something more significant than the familiar causes of the forecastle rebellion.

However they pulled too briskly to give me time to consider them very attentively. The boat buzzed through the water, and the brig ahead rapidly enlarged upon the view.

“Is that the ship?” exclaimed Miss Grant.

I answered, yes.

“Is there anything afloat to beat her?” exclaimed Broadwater in a deep-sea voice.

The half-blood turned his head upon his shoulder as if he would have his mates observe what was in his mind by his look.

“Oars!” bawled the captain. “Out boat-hook, you dog!” to the man in the bows. “Good thunder!” he growled, “what is there to make the sojers who ship as sailors nowadays skip, if it ain’t gunpowder in their shoes and a lighted match ’twixt their toes?”

We swang alongside and gained the deck.

CHAPTER V.

THE VOYAGE BEGINS.

THE moment Captain Broadwater's foot was on shipboard he shouted out, "Man the windlass, Mr. Bothwell! Get this here boat hoisted some of you! Jump, bullies, jump! There's wind enough to blow us away if ye don't stop to curl your hair!" which said, he forthwith fell to bundling about on his rounded shanks, running here and there, looking round and aloft, bawling to the mate who had gone forward, and apparently employing every art of which he was master to render the scene of commotion one of sheer distraction.

There seemed about fourteen of a crew, not counting the captain and mate. A few of them came to the davits to get the boat up, the rest laid hold of the windlass handles and began to

heave. You heard the clank, clank, of the pawls and the grinding chink of the cable coming in link by link. "Sing out, my livelies! heave to the girls, lads! heave and sing! heave and raise the dead! sing out, men! clap a tune to your muscles, my splicers! heave!" cried out the mate (as I supposed the dark young fellow who spoke these words to be); and I was not a little relieved to hear after a minute or two the peculiar long-drawn notes of a seaman breaking into a working song, followed at the proper interval by the whole body of men delivering the chorus with the true old hurricane note. It would have been a bad sign had they not sung. Only a sailor would appreciate the meaning of silence among the crew of a merchantman getting her anchor.

I took Miss Grant below to show her her berth. There was no smiling and curtsying stewardess to receive her; no obliging steward and his mates to fly to my bidding. The very cabin-boy was at the windlass, and there was nothing living under deck if it were not a lurking cockroach or a concealed rat. But then

happily we could not miss what we had not been used to, nor complain of the omission of what we had no reason to expect. Put the mail-boat traveller of to-day back fifty years and he would probably be the most forlorn and melancholy sea-borne object under the sky. I had forgotten to ask Captain Broadwater if there were other passengers, but there was no further need to trouble him: the doors of the berths were open, and a single glance sufficed to let me know that Miss Grant and I were alone. All for the best no doubt, thought I; think of some fellow here in these pent-up quarters with a snore like the escape of steam, or of some lean splentic Spaniard, constantly ill, and full of growlings in smooth water, and of aves and litanies in stormy weather!

“It is not every one who would choose to sail with Captain Broadwater,” said Miss Grant, evidently surprised at our being the only passengers.

“You do not like him? I am sorry. I was glad to get an early ship—”

“No, no, Mr. Musgrave, I do not mean that. How could you tell what sort of a person

he would prove to be. I think you will find that he treats his crew inhumanly."

I lifted my eyebrows; I had not imagined she would have seen so quickly into such a matter as that.

"Nor," continued she smiling, "do I fancy that we shall find him a very agreeable table-companion. But no matter. Rio is not so very, *very* far off now!"

We exchanged these sentences whilst we stood before our cabin-doors. Our luggage lay in a heap aft against the transom, but it was better there than in the hold. There was no one to help us, and so we shifted for ourselves. Between us we dragged the boxes and portmanteaux into our berths, and I found a new quality to admire in Miss Grant in the form of a sturdy spirit of independence. No complaints, no regrets, no peevish murmurs over our being neglected. I recollect that I thought—were we to be cast away, here is the girl to show the sailors how to manage. Little did I imagine what was before us when that fancy passed through my head!

The necessary furniture for sleeping lay in

my bunk, but it was evident I should have to make my own bed. In the spare cabin next mine was our private stock of provisions. I cast my eyes over the hampers and cases, and knowing what they contained, considered that, taking our live stock into account, we should fare on the whole tolerably enough. Calling to Miss Grant that she would find me on deck, I mounted the companion-ladder, and on emerging discovered that the crew had tripped the anchor and were running about making sail. There were many vessels getting under way at this time, and the picture was full of animation and colour. The jib had been hoisted, and the brig's head was slowly paying off; hands aloft were shouting to people below to hoist away and sheet home; the men on deck were hoarsely bawling as they dragged upon the sheets and halliards; purple-faced old Broadwater standing near the wheel was roaring out orders in whole volleys, and the mate in the waist, who had a singularly shrill voice for a man, heightened the general clamour by re-echoing the captain's orders in notes which sounded

like screams. As if all this were not distracting enough, the pigs under the long-boat, irritated by neglect, by fasting, or by the hubbub about them, were squealing as though somebody were stirring them up, whilst the concert was still further intensified by the crowing and the crackling of the cocks and hens in the coops. That the sailors should sing out at the ropes was reasonable and desirable; seamen as they haul take time from their songs, otherwise the business of hoisting, bracing up, sheeting-home would be like drawing teeth. But what purpose could Captain Broadwater serve by roaring to his crew as if they were a company of villains whom nothing short of noise and execrations could urge to exertions?

As I stood looking on, my eye was taken by the mate. He was a man apparently of my own age, tall and thin, with nothing of the air of a sailor about him. His complexion was exceedingly sallow, but his features were strikingly handsome—such a nose, mouth, and forehead as you would expect to find only in some marble fancy of a heathen deity. His eyes

were large and black and amazingly rapid in their movements, insomuch it seemed incredible that glances could be darted with the swiftness I have witnessed in this man. An extraordinary point was, his hair was that of a negro : as sheer curly black wool as ever adorned the pate of a Mumbo-Jumbo. It was a very puzzling feature, for assuredly there was no more of the African in him than there was in me. He had a small moustache, and only needed a *sombrero* hat, a cutlass, and a girdle full of pistols, to offer the completest imaginable copy of a pirate. His shrill words leapt as rapidly from his lips as his glances from his eyes, but he seemed incapable of delivering even the most commonplace order without temper. His English was that of an educated man, nor could I discover that it was tainted in the least degree by a foreign accent.

Before long all plain sail had been made, and the brig, with her bowsprit pointing to a down-Channel course, was leaning lightly under the pressure of the summer breeze and pushing gently through the trembling blue surface. The men had ceased their songs ; there was no

further occasion for the captain to bawl, and something like silence was upon the little ship. Well, thought I, here am I fairly started at last! and as I looked at the town of Deal sparkling to the high sun, and at the old chalk ramparts soaring to the brow of the Foreland giant, a queer feeling thickened my sight for an instant, though it vanished with the "Pshaw!" it evoked from me. But this was an old weakness. I believe had I used the ocean for twenty years, and was still going a voyage every twelvemonth, the sight of the cliffs of the old home quietly sliding away on the quarter and melting into the blue atmosphere would affect me as it did in my boyhood.

I turned to join the captain, and was confronted by Miss Grant. The joyousness in her face seemed to rebuke me. She had brought her hands together, and was gazing from the sails to the land with her lips parted, her breath coming and going quickly, her eyes full of gladness.

"There is one gay heart aboard," said I quietly.

"It is like a dream to me, Mr. Musgrave!"

she exclaimed, "when I think of my dull lodgings—and the thoughts that terrified me there—the dread of never seeing Alexander again—and now to find myself going to him—only a few weeks between us,—a kind friend by my side—I, who a few days ago had no friend—" She paused and repeated almost in a whisper, "It is like a dream to me."

"It is real enough," I exclaimed ; "yonder is stuff much too substantial to serve as a fabric for the manufacture of visions," and I glanced in the direction of Captain Broadwater, who, now that his ship was fairly under way, had started on the regular pendulum walk of the quarter-deck—a true sea-sawing from abreast of the wheel to forward of the main shrouds with a stare aloft, a look to windward, and then a spin of the heels for another turn ; and so on as I have seen the thing done right through a four hours' watch.

"Who is that man?" asked Miss Grant, indicating the chief mate, who was standing in the gangway with his eye aloft to witness, if he could, any imperfection in the trim of the yards and the set of the sails. I told her, and added,

“He looks fitter for the stage than for ship-board. I hope I do not misjudge him ; but if he would not knife a sailor with as little compunction as he would harpoon a dolphin, then the cut of his jib badly libels his soul.”

She watched him with fast failing curiosity and presently sent her gaze seawards. The draught of air had slightly freshened ; we were slipping past the South Foreland and opening the broad range of the Channel over the starboard bow. There was a small swell here, just enough to give a slight lift and fall to the jibboom, and to raise a faint seething noise at the cutwater, along with the airy tinkle of foam-bells sliding iridescent as beads of oil into the eddies of the short wake under the counter. There were ships all about us, and upon the far sea-line you saw the snow-like shining of canvas, serenely luminous as any star, and the dim pearly shadow beyond of the coast of France. I walked aft with Miss Grant to survey the brig from the best place in which a ship is to be viewed when you are aboard her, and here we were joined by Broadwater, who, as he approached us, pulled out and cast his little

eyes upon an immense, almost round, silver watch.

“ Pretty nigh time to go to dinner,” said he. “ It’s a blessed thing to be born with a good appetite. There’s never no harm in a man that eats hearty. I’d rather judge of a fellow-being’s conscience by his appetite than by his actions.”

“ What country does your chief mate belong to ? ” I inquired.

“ That’s more than I can tell you, sir,” he replied. “ He calls himself a Scotchman, but his hair don’t look North Country. His name’s Bothwell—Neil Bothwell. He’s the proper sort of man for sailors. Never was a chap who could work up old iron like him.”

“ Are sailors animals that they require working up, as you term it ? ” inquired Miss Grant.

“ Well, perhaps they ain’t, miss,” he replied. “ Animal’s too soft a term for ’em. The proper word’s beast—wild beast, mum ; there ye have it ! ”

I observed that whenever this captain laboured under any sudden excitement his nose reddened to it as though emotion could find

no other feature to express itself in ; owing to his eyes being much too small to convey his mind, and to the purple meshes which overspread his countenance like a net that prevented any particular expression of intelligence from rising to the surface. Methought there was something malevolent in the air with which he turned his eyes from Miss Grant to cast a glance aloft.

“Nothing off! Nothing off!” he suddenly shouted, whipping round upon the fellow that was steering; “where d’ye think the ship’s bound to, you scowbanker? Keep her to her course!” he rolled menacing to the wheel and addressed the man in a low voice, whilst he thrust his face into the binnacle. The fellow put the wheel down by a spoke or two, with a dogged look and a sullen twist of his eye upon the captain. I think he believed the skipper had meant to strike him. A sheath knife lay upon his hip, and the muscles of his arms, which were bare to the elbow, stood up like ridges of iron under the weather-browned flesh. Broadwater after some further muttering returned to us.

“You were speaking of sailors, ma’am,” said he; “there’s but one way of finding out the sort of people they are. You must take command of a ship. Of course there’s nothing good enough for ’em. They come to the vessel imbecile with drink out of the alleys in which they live when ashore, with nothing to wear but the rags they stand up in, and without having tasted food for a week maybe; and they’re no sooner aboard than up turns their noses to whatever’s offered to them, and the growlin’ begins. What’s their wittles? Beef, pork, tea, bread, mollasses, winegar—things they’d never have knowed the names of if they hadn’t been sailors; for as landsmen they couldn’t have earned as much as would have brought their eyes to the sight of ’em. They like the money they take up, but the work don’t suit their delicate constitutions. Tell ’ee what it is: there’s been a great deal too much said about the British sailor. He’s been led into such fancies of his own consequence that he’s now ate up with vanity. ‘Ne’er another nation, I’m told,’ he says, says he, ‘can produce the likes of me!’ An’ he don’t know how right he is. Ne’er another nation *do*! For

what's the name of the country whose sailors are within hailing distance of him in the art of loafing, growling, mutineering, and giving trouble all round?"

"Your crew are contented, I hope?" said I.

"Me and the mate 'll keep 'em satisfied, I warrant ye," he answered.

I must confess I did not like this man's views and talk. But then I reflected that sailors are, on the whole, a long-suffering people; that in every crew there is a proportion of sensible men who keep the others straight by their resolution to out-weather the captain, even if he should prove old Nick himself, sooner than be betrayed by injurious usage into an act that would procure the forfeiture of their wages. I likewise considered that Broadwater had doubtless been master for some years, and that he had experience enough to distinguish the line where surly and dissatisfied obedience ends, and mutiny—defiant, reckless, and often deadly—begins. Meanwhile I held my tongue, for I was in no humour to enter into an argument with him upon the virtues and vices of the British

sailor. I observed that Miss Grant watched him furtively, but with attention. Yet his face was but little better than a mask. It was impossible to decipher his mind by looking at him. He had no other faculty of self-interpretation than his speech. Nature had restricted his capacity of expression to that.

Shortly after this the cabin-boy arrived to announce dinner. The time had slipped away swiftly, and it was now one o'clock.

"The lad must mean *lunch*?" said I.

"No fear!" said Broadwater; "dinner sir, dinner!"

"And pray what is the next meal called?" I asked.

"Supper, sir; sarved at half-past five; much as a man can eat or ought to eat 'long with tea. Should ye feel faint towards bed-time, there's biscuit, cheese an' pickles. No chance of passengers starving aboard *me*!"

"Oh, we shall manage very well, I have no doubt," I exclaimed soothingly.

He trudged below leaving Miss Grant and me to follow.

"A true sea-bear, Mr. Musgrave," she whispered.

“Yet he was fairly well spoken ashore,” said I. “But to keep one’s temper is the great secret of happiness. And, besides, we need see as little of him as we choose.”

He kept us waiting, and when he emerged from his cabin his face shone from what he himself would have called a “wash down.” You might have thought he had soaped his hair as well as his face: it lay as a skull-cap on his head and glistened in the light, and I took notice of a polished spike of it projecting beyond either ear as though the old fellow had rounded off his toilet with a couple of notes of admiration. It is not many years since I made a voyage to the West Indies in a mail-steamer that would have carried me on to Rio, had I desired to visit that port; and I well remember that this, our first meal aboard the *Iron Crown*, recurred to me as vividly as though it had been an experience of yesterday when I sat down in the shining saloon of the great steam-palace at a table, white, rich, glittering with damask and glass and silver, and a waiter behind my chair to attend to my selections from a bill of fare which no excellent hotel

could go far beyond. The cabin-boy of the *Iron Crown* was a tall, knock-kneed, dejected-looking youth, who was making his first voyage; he was already oppressed with nausea, and his anxiety and fear of the captain were horrible. I think I see him now, breathing hard as he put a tureen of hot pea-soup (at which he was too ill to glance) before old Broadwater, and then staggering back with his eyes half out of his head, as though persuaded he had blundered in some way and that the captain would instantly rise and fall upon him. Our repast—and I will ask you to consider the time of year—consisted of this same soup, a boiled leg of pork, a dish of potatoes smoking in their jackets, and a pudding of the shape and appearance of a small bolster spotted with currants. The captain drank rum and water, and ate like a ship-wrecked man; and that he might not think us fastidious, and so ground and justify to himself a still more objectionable manner than he had as yet discovered, Miss Grant and I partook of the soup and toyed with a slice of the pork, but declined the pudding on the plea that the excellent breakfast we had made had left us

without appetite. The skylight lay open, but the atmosphere was nevertheless oppressive, and I was not a little grateful that the brig should be sailing along on a level keel; for though I was never sea-sick in my life I am persuaded that, had the vessel's motion been lively, the hot atmosphere of the cabin coupled with the strong fumes of the repast would have rendered me very uneasy. Broadwater was so well pleased with his dinner that he suffered the cabin-boy to stagger through the task of waiting without giving him one injurious word; but the terrified concern of the lad satisfied me that though the brig had sailed from the Thames but a day or two before, he had in that brief time undergone discipline enough to make him heartily wish himself at home again with his friends.

As I handed Miss Grant up the companion-steps, she exclaimed: "I fear you will have to thank me for some uncomfortable experiences—and yet think of me alone in this vessel!"

"Never trouble yourself about me, Miss Grant," said I, "I shall begin to enjoy myself presently. Here am I face to face with an

aspect of life quite worth examining, believe me. One might wish indeed that there were other passengers, for Broadwater has the look of a man in whom decorousness is only to be contrived by a combination of fares. But he shall help to divert us yet !”

I returned to the cabin to get a deck-chair I had purchased, together with a parcel of books, and made her comfortable. But there was nothing in literature to detain her eye or mine just then. The breeze had freshened, yet it blew a little before the beam, and the brig with her port tacks aboard had just heel enough to suggest speed by her posture. We were hauling out from the land that trended away to starboard in streaks of dim green and white and brown, with here and there a brilliant star-like shining upon it from some object that sent back the sunlight. About a quarter of a mile to windward of us, was a large Indiaman, bound as we were, and passing us, but slowly. There were soldiers aboard her, and the line of the fore-castle and main-deck was spotted with bright red uniforms ; whilst, from under the violet twilight of the awning stretched over the poop-

deck, you caught the glance of twinkling lace and metal buttons, and the fluttering coloured drapery of ladies standing or walking. Her large cabin-windows trembled back the shivering lustre that rose to them off the flashing hurry of waters. Her wake followed her like a narrow band of white satin, and as the dark blue curl at the cutwater arched its luminous ridge into snow, the leap of the froth to the afternoon splendour resembled a scattering of gems, or the shattering of a fragment of rainbow. That is the sort of ship to make a voyage in, I thought to myself; but it would not have been kind to say so. Miss Grant's gaze was full of delight and admiration. She let me know that she had a sailor's eye for atmospheric effect when she bade me observe how the white light of the canvas appeared to overflow the boundaries of the gleaming spaces, and dissolve upon the blue beyond like the sheen from a sky-line of snow-clad hills standing fair against the liquid sapphire of the winter heavens. But though the Indiaman was soon ahead of us we were sailing, too, and there was comfort in knowing it. Round as were the bows of the *Iron Crown* I judged that she had the trick of

blowing along whenever the wind found her a chance, and that her run to Rio might prove nimbler than her shape, as she lay in the Pool, had promised me. Thus we slipped onwards, diminishing the land until it fell into blobs of film and hovering streaks of blue ; and by sundown we might have been in the heart of one of ocean's deepest solitudes but for three or four orange-tintured sail, like dashes of light in the far distance, and but for the water our stem was rending being of a hue as different from the deep, dark, beautiful, pure blue of the fathomless surge as were old Broadwater's eyes from those of Miss Aurelia.

CHAPTER VI.

AN INCIDENT IN THE CHANNEL.

HAD I embarked on this voyage despondently, I believe I should have found a reason for the gloom on my mind in a very extraordinary incident that occurred on this the first night of our departure from England.

Supper had been served at half-past five. Broadwater thus spoke of this meal because it was, as it still is, one of the perversities of the forecastle parlance, so to entitle the hook-pot of tea, the pieces of ship's bread, and the remains of the contents of the noontide kid of beef or pork, which form the last of the mariner's three repasts. I had requested the captain to order one of my fowls to be killed and cooked as a provision against the oppressively substantial fare of the cabin; and though to be sure the

bird came to the table somewhat tough for the want of keeping, and somewhat prickly with unplucked quills, it at least provided us with a lighter entertainment than we should have found in the cold leg of pork, in the dish of fried slices of pudding, and in the liver and bacon which the cabin-boy placed upon the table. A great teapot was put before Broadwater, who poured out cupfuls of a liquor black as ink; from the depths of which, on stirring it, there arose quite a little plantation of twigs and leaves. He told us that there was milk enough on board to last until to-morrow, after which we must be satisfied to take our tea "neat," as he called it.

"Few vessels of the size of this brig carry cows, I suppose?" said I.

"No," he answered, "nor goats neither. It's astonishing that the art of feeding people on board ship should have rose to what it is, considering how few vittles there are which ain't of a perishable kind. They'll put up effigies to chaps who write books, to play-actors, to folks like politicians who get on for themselves and don't do nobody else any good; but if ever

mortal man in this here bloomin' world deserved a statue it was the fellow who first hit on the notion of steeping beef in brine to keep it fit and sweet for sailors' use. Think of being able to get when afloat—mind ye, miss, I says *afloat*—such a dinner as we've had to-day! The mere sight of such food at sea—not an ounce of salt in the whole biling neither—is enough to make a man think his eyes must have gone wrong!" and he lifted his hands and gazed upwards with the air of a person overwhelmed with astonishment.

At this early stage it was difficult to tell whether he desired us to accept him as a humorist. But it was not long before I discovered that he was neither a wit nor a wag, and that he was only comical when he had not the least intention of being so.

Whilst we were at supper the mate came below and took his seat quietly, saluting Miss Grant and me with a bow. But for his hair I must certainly have thought him one of the handsomest men I had ever seen, now that I could view him closely and observe the delicacy of his lineaments. His woolly crop was how-

ever fatal to him. It was a feature that neutralized all others, even when his head was covered ; the effect of the exposure of the whole growth fell little short of a shock. I tried to engage him in conversation ; but he was very reserved, answering merely in monosyllables with a constant reference in his manner to old Broadwater, whose presence I supposed kept him quiet. Once or twice he glanced at Miss Grant, but so swiftly it was scarcely possible that he should be conscious he looked at her. He despatched his meal quickly, rose, bowed to us again, and went to his berth in the forward part of the cabin.

“ Is your mate a smart sailor ? ” I asked.

“ There never was a smarter,” answered Broadwater. “ See him aloft. He’ll spring to the yardarm from the slings, and ’ll be jockeying of it when the liveliest of the hands isn’t up with the futtock shrouds.”

“ Have you known him long ? ”

“ He was my mate last voyage,” he replied, lifting the lid of the locker next to him and pulling out a bottle of rum ; and then calling for water he mixed himself as stout a nor’-

wester as ever sailor put to his lips, though he had already swallowed three large cups of tea.

"He has not the air of a seamen," said Miss Grant.

"So little," I exclaimed, "that I am surprised, captain, to hear you speak of him as a taut hand."

"Taut? well, that's perhaps the word, sir. I don't know that he's not almost as taut as me, and in saying that I pay him as handsome a compliment as one man could give to another: for let me tell you, Mr. Musgrave, that you might coast the whole of Great Britain and not meet with a shipmaster who could hold a candle to me in the art of managing sailors."

"Glad to hear it," said I, rising, not very well pleased by the languishing glance he cast at the bottle, as though debating whether to take another sup or return the liquor to the locker.

The afternoon had been hot and blinding with sunshine. The evening that now stole down upon us from astern with a single jewel glittering upon its brow, albeit the western sky was still crimson, with lagoons of delicate green amid the amber and rose and scarlet of the

light high clouds there, was delicious and tranquillizing, full of dewy softness and the balm of the shadows which trail in the wake of a glaring day. The radiance was so illusive that the sea looked to go bare to its confines, and the sense of solitude you got when you gazed over the rail could not have been more complete had the *Iron Crown* been floating deep in the heart of the Pacific.

Miss Grant and I paced the deck, greatly enjoying the coolness and repose of the night. Our talk was chiefly about her early life, her father and mother, Rio, Fraser, and the like. It seems that on her mother's side she came of a race of grandees, one of whom was an officer under Don Pedro de Valdez when that Admiral surrendered to Drake, and she said it was a tradition in the family that he was the only man aboard the Spaniard who exhibited any kind of reluctance to being made a prisoner by Sir Francis. Her mother took her to old Spain, as she called it, when she was a child, but though she met several relatives she could recollect nothing of them beyond their haughty manners and grandiose airs. Indeed, I gathered that

her mother's noble connections accepted her marriage as a blow to the family dignity. "And yet my father," said Miss Grant, "came of as good a stock as any in Scotland. Pray, what Spanish woman of title is too good for a Scotch gentleman of high descent?" I ought to love my mother's native country; but she is poor and has sunk so low that, until she can take her old place in Europe again, the pretensions of her ancient nobility must continue to be almost too ridiculous to laugh at."

Whilst we walked and chatted the time insensibly slipped away. Once Broadwater rolled over to us puffing a pipe. He offered no apology to Miss Grant for smoking in her presence, though those were days when behaviour of this sort was considered a barbarous incivility to a lady.

"There is grog and biscuit to be had below," he exclaimed, "if you or the lady has a mind for a sup before turning in."

"Thank you, we require nothing more."

"The boys lock up at half-past nine," said he, "but the cabin-light's left burning all night. There's never no need for groping aboard of *me*."

What I says to my owner is, treat your passengers well and they'll stick to ye. *I'm* not a man to be scared by a ha'porth of ile. Tell 'ee, Mr. Musgrave, how to read a man's character : watch him carve, sir ? There's some as'll help ye as though when what they're sarving out is gone there'll be nothing more left to eat on this blooming airth. Others'll act as though they understood you was a *man*. That's my kind. Aboard me everything's up to the knocker."

He uttered a loud unmeaning laugh that instantly flavoured the atmosphere with the odour of rum.

"We must consider ourselves very fortunate to fall into such good hands," said I. "A man of purple cheer, to use the language of the poet, is a person quite to my liking."

His eyes were so small that it was impossible to judge whether they were unsteady or not. He seemed to look at me as if he suspected a sarcasm in my words, and an objectionable meaning in my employment of the word "purple" ; he then with a flourish of the stem of his pipe to his forehead walked over to the binnacle, and after blowing some clouds of smoke with many

a long look around and up at the canvas, knocked the ashes out of his bowl, gave some directions to the boatswain, who, acting as second mate, had charge of the deck, and went below.

“He thinks of nothing but eating,” said Miss Grant.

“I hope that may be all,” I answered : then checking some expression of dislike and mistrust I was about to utter, I changed the subject by calling her attention to the lovely effect of the moonlight upon the sails of the brig. By daylight the vessel was the sheerest bit of commonplace ; but now that the magic pencils of the moon were busy with her, every feature was chastened, the homeliest and coarsest detail softened by the rich clear glow into a fairy delicacy of airy outline and silvered substance. She floated clothed with beauty, and swam like a sweet imagination through the shining air. Her decks gleamed out with the whiteness of the peeled almond : the black line of every seam between the planks lay as sharp to the sight as the ebon shadows of the rigging sliding to and fro to the sleepy stirring of the vessel ; there

was weight enough in the draught of air to hold the canvas motionless, and every hollow was like the image of a sail carved in alabaster. The boatswain stumped the weather-deck, and his shadow at his feet was more keenly black there than his figure against the sky. The fellow at the wheel stood stirless, but for an occasional movement of his arms, and you would have thought it was the stars that ran as they slipped up and down past him, so imperceptible was the curtseying of the brig. The dew along the rail sparkled crisply, as though, since moonrise, some secret fingers had encrusted the line of bulwarks with gems. Forward all was still ; save under the yawn of the fore-course I could distinguish the figure of the look-out man stepping athwart the fore-castle, sometimes pausing to lean over the side to send his gaze into the pale distance ahead. There was no gleam of light along the range of the starboard seaboard where the coast was.

“ If this were to last,” exclaimed Miss Grant, “ the voyage would be delightful in spite of the disagreeable obligation of having to take our meals with the captain.”

“Delightful, yes ; but too long I fear,” said I. “We want wind, Miss Grant ; we need what the shipbrokers term despatch. This moonlight, this quiet sea, this gentle wind, the transformation of this old bucket into a fabric of marble and diamonds and pearl, are enchanting indeed, —but conditions fit only for pleasure-making. You are in a hurry, and I shall not be reluctant to see Rio heave into view either. Give me, instead of the beauty of such a night as this, the thunder of half a gale of wind blowing over our quarter, a high green frothing sea chasing us, that same moon up yonder whisking like a silver round-shot from the edge of one dark cloud to another, and the brig with a reef in her fore-sail and the main-top-gallant sail set over the double-reefed topsail hurling through an acre of foam of her own making, with the white seething and hissing smother boiling into her wake that stretches to the very line of the tumbling horizon !”

“An excellent description, Mr. Musgrave, and it is what we want as you say. You have not forgotten your old calling. You talk easily enough of reefs and sails.”

"When," said I, "a man has dipped his hand into the tar-pot the stain of the stuff never quits him. Once a sailor, always a sailor."

At this moment five bells were struck by some one on the main deck.

"What time is that?" she inquired.

"Half-past ten," I answered.

"So late!" she exclaimed; "it is time to go to bed. Good-night, Mr. Musgrave."

"Let me see you to your cabin," said I, and down we went.

The lamp had been dimmed spite of the skipper's indifference to ha'porths of oil, but there was light enough to see by. I was glad to find the little bracket-lamps in our cabins alight. I suppose it was a part of the boy's duty to see to this, but there was really so little to expect in the way of attention in a craft of this kind that I was grateful for the most trifling illustration of our being looked after. I stepped into my cabin for a cheroot, not choosing to turn my back on so fair a night yet a while. Slightly as the brig swayed, the bulkheads and strong fastenings creaked as though a score of rats were worrying one another, and I guessed,

unless I should turn in thoroughly sleepy, these bothersome noises promised to keep me awake all night. Cigar in mouth I walked the deck for some time, finding a constant pleasure in the moonlit scene, and greatly enjoying the delicious hush that rested upon the vessel and the ocean. After all, thought I, this is a voyage to do me a great deal of good. It is a complete change ; there is no cold weather to be dreaded, no Cape Horn, no Southern Ocean in June. There should be some fun to be got out of old Broadwater, though I do not like him. And then I fell to thinking of Miss Aurelia. There had been so much moonlight mixed up in our oceanic intercourse so far, that it seemed to me as if I should never be able to cast my eyes upon the planet without thinking of her. Well, no woman could desire a lovelier fancy and habit of association in a man's mind. My humour took a poetic turn ; Byron's line—"She walks in beauty like the night," came into my head, along with Shelley's fine thought—"Moonlight and music and feeling are one." Here is plenty of moonlight, thought I, but even if I should call Miss Aurelia the music,

where is the feeling? But what wonderful eyes she has! I mused: what spirit, power, life, intelligence! She talks very finely too, by George! Fraser is her dear boy, and deserves to be so, I don't doubt; but the shape of his head must have vastly changed since he was my shipmate at sea, if he is able to understand one half of the fancies which take her.

Presently feeling somewhat lonesome, I crossed the deck to where the boatswain was quietly pacing.

"A fine night," said I.

"It is, sir,—lovely indeed," he replied, coming to a stand and touching his cap very civilly.

"You are the second mate, I believe?"

"Second mate and bo'sun, sir."

"Pray do not stand, I will walk with you."

We started to pace the length of the quarter-deck together. I particularly observed in him a very respectful, quiet manner, the sort of sailor-like civility one wanted to hear of in such a ship as the *Iron Crown*. The moonshine gushed so clearly that my companion's face could not have been more visible had I viewed it by daylight. He was a hearty-looking man

of about five-and-forty, clean shaven save in a streak of iron-grey whisker ; a real splicer in aspect down to such minutiae as the hang of his arms and the curl of his fingers as he walked.

“ Is this your first voyage with Captain Broadwater, Mr.— ? ”

“ Gordon’s my name, sir—Zana Gordon. Yes, this is my first voyage with Captain Broadwater.”

“ I suppose he is reckoned a pretty smart seaman ? ”

“ I don’t know I’m sure, sir.”

“ The crew at least strike me as a lively lot. They tumble about very briskly, a good sign in men newly shipped. But of course most of them will run when the brig arrives at Rio. Jack has his peculiarities as have other folks.”

“ He has a right to be peculiar, sir. His life’s a good deal out of the common ; little understood, too, save by them who have to eat and drink and jump aloft with him. And it isn’t enough that he’s expected to work for twenty-four hours in the day, and that he’s got to eat victuals which no man ashore who values

his dog would give it, unless it went mad and had to be choked ; and that his labour's of a sort ne'er a landsman would undertake, no, not if instead of signing for three pounds a month he agreed for a hundred. That isn't enough, I say. It's what lies behind, sometimes deep, and nearly always out of sight, that's the worst part of all that's bad in the seafaring calling."

"You mean bullying, brutal treatment, injurious language?" He was silent. "I should understand you," said I. "In coming aboard this morning I found a bigger hint than would have sufficed me in the faces of the boat's crew. I was a sailor myself for three years, and one doesn't want to serve longer than that to make plain words of the looks of seamen."

He still held his peace, but he had said enough to let me know his silence was mere wariness. When we got on to other topics he was as talkative as I could desire. I found he had been able seaman aboard the Indiaman I had first gone to sea in, though he had left her before I joined. She had been commanded in his time by the same man who had her when I

was a midshipman ; so here was a topic that was enough to at once establish a sort of bond between us.

Whilst we were pacing the deck the man on the look-out forward hailed my companion—as he seemed to think. Neither of us caught what he said, and Gordon hallo'd back. The man sang out again, but without making himself heard ; on which the boatswain went forward to see what was wanted. He left me standing near the wheel. There yet remained half of my cheroot to smoke out. Six bells—eleven o'clock—had been struck some ten minutes before ; but the loveliness of the night still detained me, and I was in no mood yet to exchange the warm sweetness of the ocean night-breeze for the atmosphere of my cabin. On a sudden the man who was steering started violently, let go the wheel, and ran to the vessel's side, where he hung in a strained listening posture, with one hand to his ear. I hastily crossed the deck, wondering what on earth he could have heard to cause him to start so wildly, and above all to desert his post at the helm as though he had gone out of his mind.

The moonshine streamed full upon him, and the complexion of that light, combined with his extreme pallor, made the face he slowly turned upon me ghastlier than any dead man's for the very life that worked with a sort of grin in it.

"Did you hear him?" he inquired in the low tremulous voice of a man newly recovered from a faint.

"Hear whom?" I answered, staring my hardest into the distance, misty with the radiance.

"Something away yonder called me!" said he, still speaking in the same voice, weak with terror and astonishment.

"You!" I exclaimed; "called *you*! But there's nothing there, man—nothing in sight, anyway. What should there be then for a human voice to sound from?"

"Hark! There again!" he cried, with another violent start as though he had been electrified. I had heard nothing.

"What is your name?" I asked.

"Jesse Cooper, sir," he responded, trembling pitifully.

I had begun to think that the fellow was ill,

or that he had suddenly gone wrong in his head, when he lifted his hand as if to motion silence, and then I certainly did seem to hear a faint sound coming from God knows where, that might have passed for a feeble human cry, though it syllabled nothing that was intelligible to my ears. No doubt it was no more than the sheer imagination in me wrought on by some delicate murmur of wind aloft, or by the stir of one rope lying in the chafe of another, or by the jerk of a sheet to the gentle strain of the sail, or the creak of parrel or truss. But for the moment I was hardly less startled than the man himself.

“Very extraordinary!” I said.

“You heard it, sir?” he cried, looking wildly at me.

“I certainly heard something confoundedly like a human voice hailing,” I answered, peering with all my eyes at the sea, as though I must certainly see something there if I stared long enough.

“O my God! O my God!” he groaned. “You heard it too, sir! It’s no fancy then. I’m called, and must go. It was father’s

voice. He was drowned at sea, and three years afterwards called my brother, who fell from aloft and was killed the same night. And now he's called me!"

I saw how it was, and felt very sorry that I should have owned I heard the sound, for I was now persuaded it was pure fancy on my part, that is to say, pure fancy in taking the noise I had heard to be a human voice: though by my owning I had caught the note, be it what it would, I was like to drive the poor superstitious creature clean out of his mind.

"The brig will be aback in another minute," said I. "Catch hold of the wheel, man. There's nothing in all this—nothing but nerves. Dead men can't call out—you ought to know that! If they could there'd be nothing but voices hailing the world day and night."

He grasped the wheel without answering me, and brought the brig to her course. Just then the boatswain came aft.

"Nothing wrong forward, I hope!" said I.

"No, sir. The look-out called to a mate

for a chew of tobacco, and thought, when I answered, that I was the man he had sung out to."

"Glad it's no worse," said I. "We've had a bit of a scare aft here,—all happening in a minute—too odd of its kind to require improving by anything of the same sort forward," and then I told him what had happened.

We stood in the shadow cast by the main-rigging as we conversed. He cast a glance in the direction of the wheel, and said, in a voice made up of pity and contempt:

"There's always sailors knocking about with notions of that kind. I've seen a man plump down upon his knees and pray in a loud voice all because he caught sight of a compreesant a-burning at the yard-arm. That there Cooper struck me, on first setting eyes on him, as having a queerish look in his face. If there was more learning in forecastles there'd be a deal less of these here fanciful gallivantins. Fancy a chap supposing that his father, who was drowned t'other side o' Cape Horn, could hail him after all these years out o' the English Channel!"

"Yet wiser men than this same Cooper, Mr. Gordon, hold and stoutly cling to stranger beliefs than the midnight halloing of drowned men!" said I, hammering at a flint for a light for my fragment of cigar. "If any mortal being has a right to believe in ghosts, it should be the sailor. Look aloft, Mr. Gordon!"—he turned up his weather-beaten face—"Mark how spectrally those sails show out to the moonlight. What, to a fanciful eye, should the flitting of the shadows up there to the swaying of the masts signify but the pinions of spirits hovering over those glimmering heights? and what, to the imaginative ear, should the mutterings of the breeze in the shrouds mean but the dark and secret whispered conversation of beings as little like you or me, Mr. Gordon, as the moon is like the sun? Again, look over the side—it is all wide, white silence: mere sea and moonshine to you and me, but to the lonely distempered vision the fittest canvas the wide world over for the magic lantern of the mind to cast its imaginations on."

He tilted the peak of his cap on to his

nose as he scratched the back of his head, and said: "Well, if a man's weak enough to believe in ghosts, I don't doubt he'd get more ideas about them out of such a night as this upon the ocean than maybe he'd collect out of the most crowded of graveyards ashore. But supposing such things as sperrits to be, who's going to make me believe they ha'n't got too much sense to choose the sea to knock about in? A spectre's right enough in an old country house and the likes of them places ashore; for he's not only got a roof over his head and a fire to warm himself at when the weather draws up cold, but the pick of the best room to lay in, and a larder to help himself from—if so be a sperrit ever gets hungry. But what does a ghost do at sea? If he's a land ghost he'll stop ashore; and is it imaginable, d'ye think, sir, that if he's the ghost of a sailor he'd return, without being forced, to the life he was bound to hate when he was flesh and blood, and keep company, of his own accord, with such people as skippers and mates, and endure again the cold and

wet that 'ud send him from the deck or from aloft streaming like a soaked rag to his thin blanket and leaking bunk?" He shook his head in a way that showed him fully convinced by his own reasoning.

"Isn't that a sail out yonder?" I exclaimed, at that instant catching sight of some tiny object gleaming like a faint dash of light on the sea-line, and doubting for a moment whether it was a star or a ship's canvas or the play of white water.

He looked, and said, "Yes, sir; a yacht, I allow, by the sheen of her sails."

It was as though a paring of pearl reflected the moonlight, so exceedingly dainty and delicate was the lustre of the fabric against the dark obscure of the horizon. I noticed however, whilst I kept my eye fastened upon it, that it moved with a velocity quite meteoric in its way, for when I had first descried it, it showed out a hand's-breadth forward of the foremost mainshroud, whilst before I could have counted ten it had slid midway to the forerigging.

I glanced aft. "Why, Mr. Gordon," I

said, "the wheel's deserted; the brig's coming round!"

He sprang to the helm, and ground at the spokes till the tiller-chains rattled again, meanwhile looking right and left.

"Where's Cooper, sir?" he cried; "he hasn't gone forward. I'll swear he never passed us; he wouldn't quit the helm unless he was mad!"

There was a grating abaft the wheel; I sprang on to it and strained my sight at the wake astern. The moon was westering and looking over our foretopsail yard-arm, and her light was very clear and broad. I could see nothing. The wake went away slowly in small black holes and little seething clouds, with here and there a faint flash of green light, as though a strange fish with a green eye floated up to the surface to take a view of us now and again.

"He is overboard—drownded hisself!" cried the boatswain. "Man overboard!" he roared. "Lay aft the watch! lively, or ye'll be too late!" and he fell to grinding at the wheel again to steady it.

The brig came round slowly. His cry was electrical in its effect. I had seen nothing stirring save the man on the look-out, and now in an instant the planks re-echoed the thumping and slapping of the booted or naked feet of the watch tumbling aft as if for their lives. They were busy with the boat, clearing away the falls and casting off the gripes, when up came old Broadwater.

"What's the matter? what's the matter?" he bawled.

"Man overboard, sir!" shouted the boatswain.

"Where is he? where is he? Anybody see him?" roared the skipper, springing with his oval shanks on to the grating alongside me.

"I have been looking, but can make out no signs of him," I answered.

"How long has he been overboard?" he shouted.

"Three or four minutes, I expect," answered the boatswain.

"How did he git there?" he bellowed; "was he knocked overboard?"

“Good God!” I cried, wild to think of the precious time the old fool was losing by these questions, “there’s a man overboard, captain, and he must drown if you don’t instantly seek him, if indeed he’s still afloat.”

“Keep all fast with the boat,” he vociferated; “if he’s only been overboard three or four minutes he ought to be visible if he’s on the surface, and since he ain’t it’s a proof he’s under.”

“It’s murder!” said an angry voice amongst the men standing near the davits.

Just then the mate sprang through the companion.

“Who was it said it’s murder?” shouted Broadwater, half suffocated with passion. “Mr. Bothwell, find out the man! find out the man! I must know who it is!”

“Captain Broadwater,” I exclaimed, “the poor fellow has only been overboard a few minutes, and you really—”

“Mind your own blasted business, sir,” he shouted in such a raging way that I have no pen to portray it with. “Find me the man who said it’s murder, Mr. Bothwell! Find me that man, sir!”

Disgusted by the old fellow's insolence and temper, and sickened by his indifference to human life, I walked a little way forward clear of the men, and stood leaning against the rail with my arms folded waiting for what was next to happen. The mate thrust in lithe as steel amongst the sailors, flashing his eyes first into one then into another face, whilst with shrill imperious tones which came back in echoes from the hollows of the canvas he demanded to know who had spoken the words. Broadwater, dismounting from the grating, danced in a very delirium of wrath in and out among the seamen, looking for all the world in the transfiguring light of the moon like a gigantic crab masquerading in man's attire, whilst he whipped out at the top of his pipes with all sorts of menaces, threatening I know not what unless the man who had said it was murder was named or confessed himself. The excitement grew, the hubbub increased. Oaths were so plentiful, I could only earnestly hope that if Miss Grant were not asleep she was out of hearing. I feared it would come to a fight, and expected every moment to witness the gleam of a knife

flourished in the air. The men, however, would not tell who it was that had spoken the words. Some blows were exchanged, and presently the sailors came staggering my way, driven and beaten along by Broadwater and his mate.

“Forward with ye! Forward with ye!” roared the old fellow, flourishing his arms like a windmill, whilst the mate shoved and pushed as a drover would thrust a congregation of irresolute or defiant calves. It would have struck a landsman as incredible that the men should have suffered themselves to be thus driven. They were six to two, yet they offered no resistance. But the habit of discipline is strong in the sailor, and the quarter-deck is sacred ground. In no man who has command of his fellow-beings is there vested such despotic powers as in the master of a ship. The spirit of mutiny will skulk long ere it dare show its face. There is no doubt the men would have gone forward quietly enough; but Broadwater’s and his mate’s blood was up, and the wild and wretched business did not end until the men had been driven forward of the mainmast. Blowing and gasping, though still

flourishing his hands, Broadwater came to a stand, his face so crimsoned by his exertions that he looked like a mulatto in the moonlight.

"Now see here," he said, sputtering out the words in wheezy accents, for he was too exhausted to roar, "ontil the name of the man who spoke them words is given to me, you're on bread and water! Mind that! One of you it was, and I must know who; and if bread and water don't sarve, I'll stop 'em both, I'll stop 'em both! Hunger'll make a mad beast rational. So now you know what ye've got to expect."

With this he walked aft, followed by his mate. By this time I had had enough of the deck, and was sick, grieved, and deeply worried. Broadwater's insulting expression stuck in my gorge, and I made up my mind to have a short conversation with him next morning on the subject. It was depressing beyond words, too, to think that the unhappy man, who beyond question had dropped silently overboard whilst the boatswain and I conversed forwards, may have perished for the want of a boat nimbly sent to seek him. One of the crew had called it murder, and that would be the universal

feeling of the forecastle I was sure. Broadwater was marching to and fro near the wheel, with a lurch in his gait that satisfied me he must have gone to bed pretty well primed. He was talking vehemently to the boatswain, who still held the wheel. The mate overhung the rail, gazing astern. I went below unnoticed by them, and had opened the door of my cabin when I heard my name called. I turned and saw Miss Grant standing in her doorway robed in a pink dressing-gown. Her dark eyes flashed back the light of the lamp in my berth, and with *them* and her pale face and coronal of fair hair and commanding posture she would, attired as she was, have nobly filled the canvas of a painter as the Muse of Tragedy.

“What was the cause of that great commotion on deck just now?” she inquired, without the least exhibition of alarm or nervousness.

“I had hoped that you would have been peacefully sleeping, Miss Grant. A fellow who was at the wheel fell crazy, and quietly slipped himself overboard. He was missed, and the alarm given. Hence the hurried tread overhead which disturbed you.”

“Was he saved?”

“No. Broadwater arrived rather the worse for liquor, lost his temper, and prohibited the men from lowering the boat. It is all very sad, and I would rather it had happened on the last instead of the first night of our voyage. But I have told you the worst. And do you know, Miss Grant, that it is past midnight?”

She saw that I did not want to prolong my talk just then. Indeed I was secretly much excited, much perturbed, vexed, and pained, and feared that my speech would betray my anxiety and worry her. She listened a little, and exclaimed, “Everything seems quiet now: is it still a fine night?”

“As lovely as when you left it,” I answered.

She inclined her head and closed her door, and without further ado I tumbled into my bunk, though not to sleep for a long while.

CHAPTER VII.

BOTHWELL, CHIEF MATE.

I WAS awakened early by the scrubbing-brushes of the men overhead washing down the decks. The movement of the little ship was tolerably lively, insomuch that on quitting my bunk I had some difficulty for a few minutes in keeping my legs, nor was it hard to tell, by the dim humming noise that seemed to tremble through the fabric like the vibration in a harp-string after it has been twanged, that it was blowing a fresh breeze of wind. I was soon dressed, and on gaining the deck found the brig storming along with her royals furled and her trysail-boom well on the quarter. A high sea chased us, and but for the wind being abaft the beam we must have found no little spite in the weight of the sudden gusts and brisk squalls

which distended our canvas until the sheets groaned again to the strain. The heavens were covered with large white clouds, which rolled along very stately and solemnly, with a brownish scud speeding under them like smoke ; but there were everywhere great breaks of clear blue sky of the true summer tint of the English Channel. The sea was as grand as one could wish it with flying shadow and leaping dazzle—blue ridges with a mile-long head of foam, bits of rainbow in the showering of spray, weltering spaces of violet gloom cast by the clouds and the swift glory that chased them. The brig was buzzing through it as if, to use the sailor's phrase, she had the scent at last. She rose to the head of a sea in a boiling smother, then sank all very solemnly with a leeward heel that seemed to bring the top-gallant rail within arm's-reach of the hissing yeast that went wildly swirling past, and out of which the rush of wind from under the foot of the mainsail would tear up bucketfuls of blobs and flakes, and send them scattering with a scream through the air with something of the pearly glint of the flying-fish in their flight.

My friend, Mr. Zana Gordon, had once again charge of the deck. Bucket in hand, with trousers turned above the knee, he swirled the sparkling green water that was handed to him along the deck, whilst the men scrubbed with their brushes. Recollecting that these were the fellows who were to be disciplined by a diet of bread and water into telling the captain which of them it was who had used the words that had enraged him, I ran my eye from one to another of them with a little attention, but observed nothing particular, unless it were a sort of sullenness in their deliberate manner of handling their scrubbing-brushes, which after all might have been a mere imagination on my part.

It was a lively enough scene in its way, and brought back old memories to me. The smoke of the newly-lighted galley-fire blew swiftly and merrily from the chimney of the caboose into the sea, and you noticed the farm-yard noise about of the crowing of cocks and the grunting of pigs. There was but one vessel in sight, a large topsail schooner heading to cross under our stern for a course to some French port.

The sea took her fair abeam, and she rolled so heavily that she looked like a great fan violently swayed by some Titanic hand hidden beneath the surface of the water. Well, it was just the sort of weather I had told Miss Grant yesterday that we needed. A short spell of it would drive us clear of soundings, and I knew it would make one feel as though the voyage was to have an end when one should find the course set fair by the binnacle compass for South America.

The boatswain saluted me with a flourish of a tarry thumb to his forehead, but he was too full of business to talk. After I had been on deck for about a quarter of an hour, by which time the scrubbing was over, and the seamen were smacking the planks with a swab or two, Broadwater came up through the companion-hatch, where he stood a while holding on, and blinking around him as though not yet wide awake. Then going to the wheel he brought his eyes in a squint upon the compass, and after a survey of the fabric aloft, and a slow gaze round the sea, he called out to me, "Good morning, sir. Tow rope's in hand at last, I allow. No hint of kedging in this here movement."

I inclined my head coldly and distantly to him, and then suspecting that any kind of sub-acid or chilly posture would be entirely lost upon such an intelligence as his, I resolved to deal with him in a way that should at least be intelligible.

"I wish to speak a word with you, Captain Broadwater," I called out.

He looked at me a moment as though he feared his dignity and importance would suffer by having to go to me, and then after a half glance at the fellow at the wheel with a slow pulling down of his nose with his fore-finger and thumb, a trick that seemed to help him to arrive at a conclusion, he came to where I stood, but very leisurely, appearing the while to think of nothing but the appearance of the deck and the movements of the men swabbing.

"Well, Mr. Musgrave," he exclaimed, "what is it, sir? Slept pretty comfortable, I hope? Nothing the lady can find to complain about, I trust?"

"Sir," said I, "you were extremely rude and offensive to me last night. You are captain of this ship, and I am a passenger who has paid

for certain rights—civility from you amongst the rest—which I intend to claim ; and if you do not concede me every tittle of what I have parted with my money to obtain, I will make it so hot for you on my return to England that you shall wish yourself hanged ere you ever set eyes on me. And now, sir," I continued, with the sternest face I could contrive to put on, though my gravity was not a little staggered by the ludicrous expression of bewilderment that overspread his singular countenance, "I insist upon your apologizing to me at once, Captain Guy Broadwater, for the insolent manner in which you addressed me last night."

He cast his little eyes from the deck to the sky and back again, frowned, scratched his head, and by other signs seemed to wish me to suppose that he was in an agony of thought. Then, with an inimitable air of being all abroad, he pointed with his forefinger to his waistcoat, and said, "Me! *me* insult you! You're a-dreaming, Mr. Musgrave."

"No dream at all, sir," said I ; "you were confoundedly insolent to me, and ruder even in

your manner than in your speech, and I demand an apology."

Again he looked up at the sky and down at the deck, as though the effort to recollect what had passed caused him acute suffering.

"What did I say?" he suddenly asked.

I told him.

"Well, Mr. Musgrave," said he, "you're a gentleman, and I should be sorry for to swear that I never spoke them words, seeing that you tell me I *did*. But I can assure you, sir, on my honour as master of this here *Iron Crown*, that I have no recollection of using the term you mention. If I did, why then I 'pologize, and no man can do more."

On hearing this I bowed coldly and walked aft, congratulating myself upon my resolution, for I believed I had made him understand he would have to be very cautious henceforth in his dealings with me, and I had also got to see that the man, like all other bullies, was very white-livered at bottom. There was indeed danger that a person of this nature would extend something of the treatment he exhibited to his crew to Miss Grant and me; and unless I

asserted myself promptly it might end, through a natural aversion on my part from any kind of worry or annoyance, to my insensibly submitting to his rough usage, which of course he would accentuate in proportion as I yielded, until my life on board might become as uneasy as if I had been one of the crew. This is a feature of a voyage absolutely impossible in these days, but in my time it was a condition (in small passenger vessels, of course) as familiar as the coarseness of the food and the gloom and discomforts of the cabin.

I kept my back on the quarter-deck for a little, whilst I stood watching the sparkling race of froth hurling from under the shadow of our counter to the creamy summit of the green surge chasing us, during which I could hear the old fellow calling to the seamen in such a tone as few men would think fit to adopt towards a dog. If it was convenient to him to forget his insulting manner to me, it was plain that whatever else he chose to remember was very present to his mind. For how long a period the men who formed the starboard watch would consent to the discipline of bread and water it was hard to

conjecture ; though indeed the sailor of that period could scarcely suffer a very severe hardship in the deprivation of lumps of meat out of which, whether raw or cooked, the mariner beguiled the tedium of the voyage by manufacturing snuff-boxes for his grandfather, work-boxes for his sweetheart, and tobacco-boxes for himself.

Miss Grant did not leave her cabin till breakfast was upon the table. Broadwater, who was seated when she arrived, got up and distorted his figure with a bow, whilst he asked her, with much such a pleasant face as he wore when I first made his acquaintance, what sort of a night she had passed, and if the brig's tumblefication troubled her much. This stroke of politeness was meant as much for me as for her. After the exchange of a few common-places about the weather and so forth, Miss Grant said to the captain, " Were they not able to save the poor fellow who fell overboard last night ? "

" No, mum," he answered, with a half look from me to a lump of sausage which he held aloft on a fork ; " the long and short of it's this. The man was in the water some minutes afore

the alarm was given. The surface lay clear under the moon, and had he been showing there was enough of us looking for some one to see him. He meant to drown himself, and he *did* it."

"But apart from the chance," said I, "of rescuing him as a mere matter of humanity, would not his loss, by weakening your working strength, make you anxious to be sure that he was not to be recovered?"

"There was no signs of him, sir," he answered doggedly. "I don't want to lose no men if I can help it; but if a chap chooses to slip overboard so quietly that no one hears him touch the water, what's to be done?"

"But you didn't know when you first came on deck that he *had* drowned himself," said I.

"No," he answered, "but didn't I act as if I did? which means that I'm one of those men who don't need to know a thing to understand it."

I turned to Miss Grant, and related the strange story of the preceding night, whilst Broadwater worked away at his breakfast with both hands, and masticated with such energy as to apparently hold him deaf.

“Strange,” she exclaimed, “that you should have thought you heard the voice that called him. Of course it was fancy, but it is dreadful to think how even a little imagination may overpower the reason.”

“There was everything to help the imagination,” said I: “the silence upon the vessel and upon the ocean—the wild, straining look in the man’s eyes with the sparkle of moonlight in them as he turned them upon me, full, as I can now see, with the anguish of madness—and then the misty silvery distance towards which he bent his ear with his hand to it. I believe had he told me there was a phantom out there, and pointed to it, I should have seen *something*, if not the apparition he himself beheld.”

Presently, after a prodigious meal, Broadwater arose and left the cabin.

“Why did not he attempt to save the man?” Miss Grant said.

“I believe the fellow when he first came on deck was still muddled with the fumes of the liquor he had swallowed, and barely understood what had happened or knew what he was about.” And then I told her how he had in

sulted me, and how a little while before I had obliged him to apologize. My mere telling her this thing touched the spirit in her. The look of her as she listened to me made you feel that here was a woman to fill any man who should vex her with the feelings of a dog. Before we quitted the table, the mate arrived to get his breakfast. He bowed to us quietly as before, seated himself without speaking, and fell to his meal with great soberness and civility of demeanour. It seemed hard to reconcile his subdued bearing, which seemed by its air to be habitual to him, with his fierce and passionate treatment of the men, and particularly his desperate and raging behaviour of the previous night. Now that the captain was away I hoped to be able to draw him into conversation, and began by saying that if this breeze lasted we might look for a run of two hundred and fifty knots in the twenty-four hours.

“Quite that, sir,” he answered.

“That was a sorry business last night, Mr. Bothwell. If the men forward are superstitious, they will not like it.”

“They won’t like their company being weak-

ened you mean, sir?" lifting his gaze from his plate and eying me steadily for a moment.

I thought to myself, as I glanced at his woolly head, his handsome features and dark eyes, which when they fell from my face rolled in a hundred nimble glances, fastening upon nothing, and yet seeing everything as you would say, "Lord, what a corsair this rogue would make in the hands of a Byron or a Michael Scott!"

"No," said I; "I mean they won't like Captain Death boarding their craft almost before the anchor they have broken out has dried at the cathead."

His swift glance darted from me to Miss Grant, and then with a smile that exhibited a set of fine, even white teeth, the whiter for his dark moustache, he said, in an almost effeminate way, "Oh, sir, we must not trouble ourselves about what the sailors forward think."

"Why not?" asked Miss Grant quickly. "Are they not men like you and Captain Broadwater? You would be unable to sail this ship without them. A master on land dare not treat his men-servants as captains at sea treat their crews."

He answered softly, "No, madam, because no doubt men-servants would give notice and seek another situation."

"Do you believe it, sir?" she exclaimed, flushing and gazing at him irefully; "indeed you would find they would not rest there——" She checked herself, and added laughingly, and looking at me, "I have not a very high opinion, Mr. Musgrave, of the spirit and courage of lackeys and footmen, but I truly believe that if they were treated by their masters as sailors are by their commanders there would be a great many mysterious disappearances happening amongst the nobility and gentry."

"I am always glad, madam," said the mate, showing his teeth again, "to hear the ladies championing poor Jack. He has very few friends, very few friends."

He shook his head without any suggestion of sarcasm about him, and the gesture seemed to me to make his eyes shine as if they had been formed of some black liquid with a gleam upon it that danced to the rippling of their movement.

"How long have you been at sea?" I asked bluntly.

“Ten years, sir.”

“Humph!” I exclaimed, “a good deal of hard weather and knocking about may be packed into ten years. Apparently you are of Captain Broadwater’s mind, that the sailor moves forward the better for being kicked.”

He made no answer.

“I have heard,” said I, addressing Miss Grant, “of captains whose hatred of the sailors serving under them was really phenomenal. I remember being told of the commander of a ship that he could never bring himself to offer one of his seamen anything with his hand, but that he would put it down upon the deck and *kick* it at him. By the way,” I continued, turning upon the mate again, “what’ll be the upshot of this trouble with the starboard watch? The men are not likely to peach upon their messmate, and if the man who used the words won’t confess himself, what’s to follow? The fellows will not surely put up for a whole voyage with nothing to eat and drink but ship’s bread—bad enough, I dare say—and a draught from the scuttle-butt?”

Before he could reply, Miss Grant said

quickly, "To what do you refer, Mr. Musgrave?"

"Why," I answered, "last night on the captain refusing to send a boat on the chance of picking up the man who had gone overboard, one of the group of fellows who were at the davits exclaimed, 'It's murder!' and the whole of the watch are not to be allowed any other provisions but biscuit until the man who used the words is discovered."

"He is discovered," said the mate almost blandly.

"Oh, indeed!" I exclaimed, "how, pray?"

"He came to me about twenty minutes ago, and said that as he did not choose his mess-mates should suffer for what he had done, he would own he was the man who cried out, 'It's murder!'"

"He should be pardoned for his honesty," exclaimed Miss Grant. "I hope the captain will let the matter rest. I will ask him to forgive the poor fellow."

The mate softly wiped his moustache, rose, bowed, and went on deck.

"One should say," said I, "that there are the

seeds of a startling romance in that chap ; but I fear that it is nothing but the vilest sea-going commonplace made a little odd by good looks and Hottentot wool."

"I agree with you," she answered ; "he is even more colourless than his captain ; yet prosaic as they both are, they are equal to creating a very great deal of trouble ; and do you know, Mr. Musgrave," she said, suddenly and even vehemently, "I am extremely sorry that we ever took berths in this ship."

"Oh, but it is a little early to be anxious," said I cheerfully. "I quite know what is in your mind : you fear that the behaviour of Broadwater and his mate may lead to the crew giving trouble. Well, the same misgiving is my reason for speaking out so plainly to both men. If they are made to understand that I am watching them and observing their conduct, they may have sense enough to restrain themselves for the reason that I should be at hand as a witness to testify to their inhumanity, and to justify any act of insubordination that the sailors might be driven to."

She was silent for a little, and then

said, "Whereabouts is the ship now, Mr. Musgrave?"

"I suppose we are hardly abreast of the Isle of Wight yet," I answered.

She reflected again, and then clasping her hands and bringing them to her lips, and looking at me with a sort of wistfulness, though she spoke with hesitation, she said, "I almost—I *almost* wish that the captain would put us ashore."

This was a desire to puzzle me considerably. I answered, "Of course, Miss Grant, if you are reluctant to proceed I will unhesitatingly ask the captain to put us ashore; but I should not like him to refuse, and unhappily there is no doubt that he will refuse, because of course he would conclude that we should return to London and lodge a complaint against him, and so lose him his berth. Now, if he should decline to put us ashore my position would be an awkward one. He need do nothing but keep the ship heading steadily on her course, and we are helpless."

She interrupted me: "And the passage money would be forfeited. No, I am silly to

wish such a thing. I was all eagerness and impatience yesterday. It is just a little passing misgiving." I was about to speak. "No," she exclaimed with energy, "we are here and will remain here."

"Be it so," said I, not a little relieved, for I foresaw a very great deal more of trouble than I had the least disposition to undergo, even to oblige *her*, had she insisted on my asking old Broadwater to haul his brig in to the land, and set us and our baggage once more on *terra firma*.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE HALF-BLOOD'S PUNISHMENT.

MISS GRANT went to her cabin and I on deck, where I observed Broadwater and the mate marching the length of the quarter-deck and busy in conversation. There was a middling high sea running, which, had it been on the bow instead of on the quarter, would have rendered the motion of the brig extremely uncomfortable. As it was, it swung the vessel with an almost rhythmic steadiness as it under-ran her. It was first a long upward heave to the foaming liquid brow, then a gradual lean over to the full weight of the wind till the lee-channels roared in the smother of spume over the side, and then a steady slide down into the speckled, froth-laced trough, with a recovery of the hull that started us with a level keel for

the next buoyant climb. Not above a cannon-shot to windward was a large frigate, close-hauled under double-reefed topsails and reefed foresail. She showed no colours, but to a nautical eye a single glance sufficed to prove her English. She was plunging heavily, and would lift her head out of the boiling white about her bows until eight or ten feet of the keel at her forefoot showed clear, with a dull yellow glancing from the metal sheathing that looked like a mirroring of pale light on the wet, black, gleaming sides of the beautifully moulded hull. As she rolled she gave us a view of a portion of her weather-deck, with a hint of black artillery in certain covered, muzzled shapes, crouching under the defences of her bulwarks crowned with the white line of hammocks. The movement of a spot of red here and there marked the mechanical pacing of a marine. I never remember a nobler sea-show than was offered by this fine frigate, with her broad white line broken by the closed gun-ports, the superb set of her reefed canvas, the airy grace of her rigging ruling the piebald hurrying sky with dark lines of shrouds, thinning as they

soared, till they rose delicate as the fibres of a spider's web to the glimmering button of the truck at the royalmast-head, whence streamed the long pennon straight out upon the wind, like a streak of light up there ; whilst over the weather-bow there was the sharp and frequent flash of a green sheet of water that broke into smoke as it flew, or a sudden lifting above the bulwark-rail of a column of froth, which the blow of the bow would send arching back till 'twas a sheer huddle of dazzling yeast under the radiant figurehead, that, with some hero's wreath in its hand, plunged to the giddy whiteness only to soar triumphant a moment after.

It was old Broadwater's duty to hoist and dip the ensign to her. This is a civility I should be very punctual in exacting if I were commander of a British man-of-war. The skipper, however, rolling along on his bow-legs by the side of the mate, did not look as if he even knew there was anything in sight. He never threw so much as a glance in her direction, though I could see some men at work on the fore-rigging watching her with an admiration that rendered them, for the time being,

insensible to the presence of the skipper and his companion.

There was one of a dozen coils of rope hanging over a belaying-pin swinging to the heave of the hull. I went and sat myself in it, for the shelter of the bulwark there from the gusty blasts which were splitting upon the rigging full of whistlings and cryings; and there swayed, cradle-like, by the hanging fakes, I leisurely loaded my pipe, and fell to chipping, in the old-world style of that age, at a flint for a light. Whilst thus occupied, my eye was taken by the figure of a man standing at the foot of the foremast. I was thinking of other matters at that moment, and yet I can recollect wondering, as my gaze went from him after a brief glance, that any man belonging to either watch should have the courage to stand idle on deck whilst the rest of the people were at work, when both the captain and the chief mate were pacing within eyeshot of him. Presently glancing his way again, I noticed that he still remained in the same posture, that is to say, with his back against the mast and his face looking a little forward of the fore-rigging, his arms folded

upon his breast, and his legs together with the feet turned out, like a soldier in a sentry-box. The mast was painted white, and hence it was, I suppose, that I did not immediately observe that the man was bound to it by turn upon turn of rope, starting from his arm-pits and terminating a little below his knees. I know not what there was in the sight to startle me, but I believe had a seaman fallen from aloft at my feet, and there lay bleeding and broken, the thing would not have shocked me more than the spectacle of yonder sailor secured to the mast as though he were some dangerous maniac, and rendered motionless by the ligatures, saving that he could use his head and had the freedom of his arms.

I had not been long enough on board to be able to distinguish the crew, but this man I seemed to remember. To make sure, I got out of the coil of rope and went a few paces forward, and recognized in the fellow bound to the mast the half-blood who had been one of the boat's crew that rowed us aboard from Deal. If his face had struck me then you will suppose that it impressed me very strongly now.

Whether owing to the strangulation of the rope about him, or to the thoughts in him, his complexion, that I had observed to be of a clear olive, had changed to an indescribably ugly colour, which I can only speak of as an ashen green. It reminded me of the hue I once saw in the face of a dead sailor whose cheeks had been burnt to an almost chocolate tint by exposure in an open boat in the Indian Ocean. He turned his dark eyes upon me with a savage glare in them of mutiny, malice, hatred, and so full of defiance withal, that but for the evil passions his countenance expressed you might have accepted his air as one of bitter and contemptuous pride. It was intolerable that he should think I had inspected him out of mere curiosity, which I saw from his manner he supposed; and since he would be too wild in his mind to interpret the sympathy which I am sure must have been visible in me—for, as I say, the sight of the poor bound fellow inexpressibly shocked and grieved me—I turned my back on him and walked right aft.

Broadwater left the mate and came up to me.

“That’s true old North Country style, sir,”

he exclaimed, "to sit in the bight of the rigging over the pin under the lee of the bulwarks. I've been hove to in the North Sea, and sat for hours along with the rest of my mates, just as you've been a-sitting, waiting for what was to happen next."

"It is hard to find a corner to smoke in," said I, "on board a flush-decked vessel. Where there's a poop or a round-house, a man may discover a nook clear of the gale, and manage to keep the cinders in his bowl till the fire's all gone. Did you ever serve aboard a Dutchman, captain?"

"No, by thunder!" he answered; "what's put such a question as that into your head, sir?"

"Why," I said, "I notice that you have got one of your hands forward there seized to the foremast. The Dutch used to serve their rogues so—sometimes however going a little further than you, for to make sure of the fellow they'd pin him through the hand with a knife."

"You're keeping a bright look-out aboard this vessel, sir," he exclaimed, shooting an odd look at me out of his little eyes.

“My good fellow,” I cried, “I should be blind not to see such a sight as that. What has he done? Murdered a shipmate?”

“Almost wish he had,” he growled, “for that ’ud bring about the sort of treatment he wants. He’s the man who spoke them words last night.”

“Ha!” I exclaimed, “and for that you are dosing him with a spell of fresh air that he may go to his dinner with a good appetite?”

He left me under pretence of looking into the compass. I will not say that he was afraid of me, but I am quite sure that if it had not been for my talk with him in the morning, for the manner I then put on, and which I still wore, he would have dealt with me scarce less roughly and insolently than had I been one of his seamen. I knocked the ashes out of my pipe, looking away towards the horizon, below which and out of sight lay the line of the English coast, and felt myself urged by a very strong impulse to request him to head for the nearest port, and to put Miss Grant and myself ashore, as his behaviour to his men, though we were not yet twenty-four hours from Deal, had rendered us

extremely uneasy, insomuch that we were resolved not to pursue the voyage in his ship. But I was again checked by the considerations which had occurred to me whilst talking on the subject with Miss Grant. He might refuse to comply, lose all control over himself in the notion that my intention was to ruin him, and so affront me that I should be at a loss how to act. I quite perceived that, unless I could be sure he would put us ashore, I should be acting unwisely in asking him to do so, for, if he persisted in sailing away with us, then whilst we remained on board his ship we should have to submit to any sort of usage he chose to give us. I stamped my foot on the deck with vexation and worry, and could have cursed the hour in which I had ever set eyes on the *Iron Crown*.

I had hoped when Miss Grant came on deck that the figure of the fellow bound to the mast would escape her attention, and was scheming to place her chair close against the wheel on the port side where the man would be hidden from her; but the instant she came out of the companion and looked forward she started violently, and exclaimed:

“Why have they bound him? What has he done to deserve such a punishment as that?”

“He is the man,” I answered, “who cried out last night, ‘It’s murder!’ when the captain ordered the boat to be kept fast.”

“And they have tied him to the mast merely for uttering those words?”

“Ay! It’s a bitter burning shame; the indignity of this sort of punishment is the worst part of it.”

“I shall ask Captain Broadwater to release him,” she exclaimed, with the indignation in her surging up hot to her face and flashing in her eyes. “I shall tell him that the sight pains and disgusts me, and that he has no right to oblige his passengers to witness such painful and miserable spectacles.”

Before I could check her she swept up to old Broadwater, and towering over him with such an air as Siddons would have worn in her tragedy parts, her face flushed, her eyes on fire, her head thrown backwards, she levelled her white forefinger at the half-blood, gazing meanwhile full into the crimson expanse of the skipper’s countenance, and exclaimed, “What

has that man done to merit the sufferings of mind and body he must be enduring there?"

The captain was a broad and muscular man, but short; and her erect, swelling, impassioned figure made him look like a boy by her side as he stared up at her. Her sudden dramatic accost took him completely by surprise. His countenance wore a ludicrous expression of bewilderment. He half turned towards the mate, as if to invoke his assistance, and then exclaimed in a hoarse stutter, "Why, mum, that there man—he's about the impudentest son of a swab—the long and short o't is, he as good as called me a murderer last night. Had he been a man-o'-war's man he'd have been spread-eagled to the toon of twelve dozens for saying much less than that!"

I joined Miss Grant and offered her my arm; for though no woman ever stepped a heaving deck more easily and gracefully than she, yet the slope now was sometimes so sharp as even to make Broadwater lurch, and I was afraid of her carrying away, to use the sea term, as she was quite forgetful, as I could see, in the temper and mood that then possessed her, of the

tumbling of the platform on which she stood.

"The words," she exclaimed, "were no doubt forced from the man by a sudden impulse. Why did you hear them? You would not punish a man for *thinking*."

"Yes, I would, if I knew it," answered Broadwater, plucking up a bit, and yet looking uneasy too.

"You must release him, sir," she exclaimed; "it is a sight that makes the whole ship painful and distressing to me."

"You cannot refuse the lady's request, captain," said I.

"But I can, though," he blustered; "why, smother my precious eyes and bile every blooming limb that I own! who's cap'n of this here craft? Release him! Certainly not. If the sight's too painful to view, the lady needn't look. An' what's there painful about it? Why, some men would have chucked him into the forepeak, smothered him up down there in the blackness, with nothen but rats to keep him company, 'stead of benevolently sarving him as I do by suffering him to stop up in the fresh air

for his shipmates to look at and meditate on. Mr. Musgrave," he suddenly exclaimed, in a bullying, angry voice, "I'll thank you to tell the lady that I'm the commander of this here vessel, and of everything that consarns her and her navigation; and I shall feel obliged, sir, by your recollecting of that fact yourself, sir, for it'll spare ye the trouble of cross-examining my chief-mate here, sir, as if you was a hadmiralty judge. No, by thunder! my name's Broadwater—Guy Broadwater—and I'm master of this vessel, and them there men forrard are my crew, and I'll thank you and the lady not to meddle with my consarns, but to be satisfied so long as I perform the part expected of me, which is, to carry you and this here cargo to Rio!" and feigning to be in a mighty temper he bowled away to the taffrail, and then came back again breathing hard and looking swiftly up and around him, with a fine air of injury, resentment, and righteous indignation, not ill-managed on his part, though—like the ghost of a squall—it was to be seen through.

There was no affectation in Miss Grant's pity and disgust. She lingered a little while on

deck, and then went below to her cabin, declaring that she could not bear to see the man standing helpless and motionless, as if he were dead, suffering grievously as she feared from his posture, which rested the whole weight of him upon his naked feet, and from the many coils of rope which girt him so tautly and plentifully to the spar, that the mere sight of them made one draw one's breadth with difficulty out of sheer sympathy with their suggestion of strangulation. The men at work in the rigging and about the decks did not give him the least heed that I could discover. I noticed one or two of them glance aft when Miss Grant spoke to the captain and pointed forward, but in a sulky, incurious way, as though what was passing had no interest whatever for them. This behaviour might have been due to the presence of the mate, whose rapid glances seemed to dart all over the brig in a breath, and who, as I had already observed, never suffered a man to halt for an instant in any job he was upon. No doubt his almost preternatural quickness in detecting the least hint of laziness or languor was already as well known to the men

as if the vessel had been on the high seas a couple of months. Yet Miss Grant's speaking to the captain about the pinioned half-blood was in its way an incident so far removed from all ordinary shipboard occurrences that the sullen inattention of the men to it impressed me greatly. If heavy troubles do not befall this ship ere long, thought I, it will not be because the spirit of mischief is even already wanting amongst her crew; and I sent a gloomy glance seawards in the direction where old England lay, feeling that I would not only gladly forfeit the passage-money I had paid, but ten times that amount over again, to find myself and Miss Grant once more safe and snug in London.

CHAPTER IX.

THE HALF-BLOOD IS RELEASED.

HOWEVER, since we were to be locked up with old Broadwater for a spell of weeks that might run into months, our policy was to put the best face we could upon our condition. But Miss Grant was not to be induced to return on deck whilst the man continued lashed to the foremast. I pointed out that he was not suffering as she fancied, that at all events he had not yet been pinioned long enough to be in pain, and I also begged her to remember that a posture and exposure which might strike her as a severe punishment would sit lightly upon a sailor, whose vocation is supposed to harden him into the most extraordinary capacity of endurance. But it would not do. She refused to quit the cabin until the man had been re-

leased, and so she remained below the whole day. Indeed I had some trouble to persuade her to dine at the table with the captain, though her good sense helped her in this at last ; but throughout the meal she could scarcely bear to glance at him, scarcely endure to listen to him.

On his side he behaved as if he were willing to let bygones be bygones, as if indeed after careful consideration he was on the whole willing to overlook the past. His dinner put him into a good humour. It consisted amongst other things of a large round of corned beef ; and when the cabin-boy came staggering with it into the cabin, old Broadwater seemed so much impressed by the beauty of the joint that he lay back upon the locker, with a carving knife and fork sticking up out of his great fists, which he rested upon the table, and in this attitude remained motionless for some moments, as though his transport would not suffer him to move or speak. However, he probably judged by our faces that we were in no temper to listen to his eulogies of the joint. He carved with a countenance of rapture, and with an air

of concern, too, as though the cutting up of such a dish as that was a business not to be lightly and irreverently approached.

It was necessary to talk to the man, so I said, "If this breeze holds I suppose we shall soon be swept out of soundings?"

"Yes," he answered, pouring out a caulk of rum, and holding up the glass to the skylight to see how much it held. "We shall be having the Lizard over our stern this time to-morrow, sir, if we keep all on as we are."

"Upon my word," said I, speaking somewhat heedlessly, out of the mere fulness of my thoughts just then, "so much has happened since the anchor was lifted off Deal that it seems as if we had been a week on the road already."

"What's happened?" he asked quickly. "It's all been plain sailing, hasn't it? There's been nothen that you as a passenger have had cause to grumble about?"

"The time seems long, anyhow," I responded curtly.

"It'll have to be longer yet afore it's ended," said he, turning his little eyes upon Miss Grant.

She had hitherto kept silent, scarce glancing at him : now she suddenly exclaimed, with a flash of her dark eyes full into his ruddy face, "When do you intend to release the unfortunate man you have fastened to the mast?"

He took a long pull at his glass of rum and water before answering her, and then said, "Not until I think the weather's had time to purge him."

"Is he to be kept there all day?" she continued.

"Ay, mum, and all night, too. Billy," addressing the cabin-boy, "jump with this here beef, my lad! away with it! if ye drop so much as a toothful of grease, stand by! and mind that the pudden's covered up as ye bring it along, and keep to leeward with it, d'ye hear? for there's a showering of spray to wind'ard now and again, and if you salt the pudden I'll salt *you*! The fact is, mum," he continued, addressing Miss Grant afresh, "there's no use in half-measures with sailors. We've got a crew aboard as wants riding down, and the man as needs it most is the yaller rogue you're a-pitying. Were the fellow an Englishman I don't know

that I shouldn't consider a twelve hours' spell at the foot of the fore mast as much as he deserves; but he's a half-and-half, and my experience is, the blacker the blood that runs in a man's veins the longer's the tarm of teaching he stands in need of."

"Is he to be kept without food?" she exclaimed.

"He is, mum," he answered cheerfully.

On this she rose and left the table without another word.

"What makes the lady so terribly sensitive to sailors' feelings?" exclaimed Broadwater, with as much puzzlement on him as his countenance could express. "I see she ain't married. Has she a sweetheart at sea? On less maybe you——?" He shut one eye, and looked at me with the other.

"Never concern yourself about her or me either," said I. "Keep your mind clear, my friend, for you'll be wanting plenty of space presently for the thoughts your crew'll fill you with."

"What do you mean, sir?" he exclaimed coarsely and angrily.

"I mean this," I replied quietly, though my feelings were hot enough, "if you do not shift your course and head on another tack with your forecastle, there'll be a mutiny aboard before we're a week older."

At this his little mouth rounded into a complete circle, the blood came into his face, down dropped the slab of pudding he was in the act of raising to his lips. "Mutiny!" he cried. "Mutiny aboard *me*! Mutiny afore another week's out! Why—why—why," he stammered, "what have ye been hearing of to put such fancies into your head?"

"I judge by my eyes, not by my ears," I replied, still coldly and very quietly, "though I don't doubt that a few minutes of listening at the forescuttle would convince me even more fully than my sight."

Just then the mate arrived, having been relieved by the boatswain that he might get his dinner.

"Mr. Bothwell! Mr. Bothwell!" cried Broadwater, whose face was of a dark crimson, "what d'ye think Mr. Musgrave here's a-threatening? Why—why—why, that there'll

be a mutiny aboard *me* afore another week's out."

"Indeed!" answered the mate blandly, but nevertheless exhibiting his teeth in a smile that made his handsome face mighty malevolent while the grin lasted; "I hope not. On what does Mr. Musgrave found his fears, sir?"

"On the captain's and your usage of the men," said I, resenting the sarcastic air of the fellow.

"But what have Captain Broadwater and I done, sir, to justify this terrible apprehension on your part?"

"I want you to understand, Captain Broadwater," said I, not choosing to heed the mate's question, "that you and you alone are responsible for Miss Grant's and my safety. I now warn you that that safety is being seriously imperilled by your treatment of the crew of this brig. Indeed," I continued, suffering my temper to get the better of me, "already the outlook of this voyage fills me with so much uneasiness that since we are still in the English Channel, and—with this wind—within a few hours' run of a port, Miss Grant and I are

willing and desirous that you should set us ashore; the conditions being, of course, that we forfeit our passage-money."

Now I had fully believed that on my saying this he would have fallen into a violent passion, raged at and insulted me, defied me to compel him to head the ship for the coast, and so on. Instead, to my very great surprise, the blood faded out of his face; pale indeed he could not become, but the disorder of his mind manifested, itself in a complexion that would answer to pallor in another man's countenance. He pushed his plate from him as though his appetite were gone for ever, and in a wonderfully subdued, changed voice, exclaimed, "Mr. Musgrave, sir, I beg that you'll banish that wish from your mind, sir. To set ye ashore would be my ruination. There's nothing in the world, that I can see, that need make ye oncomfortable. The cabins are roomy, the living up to the hammer, there's ne'er a stouter vessel afloat than the Iron Crown; and, though it's me as says so, there's no man living that Capt'n Guy Broadwater 'll yield to in the knowledge of navigating and handling a

ship under all circumstances of wind and weather. There's nothen either in the behaviour of the crew, or in my treatment of 'em, to breed oneasiness. Indeed," he continued, speaking most abjectedly, "if the lady's really so consarned by the sight of that there Ernest Charles at the foremast, why, then, to please her I'll lubberate him in the second dog-watch, 'stead of keeping him there all night, as was my intention."

The mate ate his dinner with a wooden face.

"You can do as you please, Captain Broadwater," said I, rising. "I have not the slightest intention to meddle with your notions of discipline. I simply desire to point out to you that your treatment of the crew is such as to render the prospects of the voyage very gloomy indeed, and if you will head the ship for some adjacent English port, Miss Grant and I will be very glad to leave her."

"I hope not, sir! I'd rather not, Mr. Musgrave!" he exclaimed, speaking and looking so dejectedly that I suspected his manner was to a large degree assumed. "To shift the helm in

this here wind would be extremely awkward—extremely awkward ; and it'ud ruin my reputation as the master of a passenger-vessel if you was to give out the reasons of your leaving, which are all imagination, sir—the fancies of a gent as has long lost sight of the sailor's character, and forgot that if life was all soup and bully in the fo'k'sle there'd be no work done—no work done whatever !”

I caught one of the mate's swift glances ; 'twas as full of malice as could well be packed into such a nimble roll. There was nothing more to be said, and in silence I quitted the cabin, satisfied with my second victory that day over Captain Broadwater ; but at the same time also profoundly convinced that a five minutes' conversation with his mate would influence the old fellow into a resolution to keep me and Miss Grant on board at all hazards, trusting maybe to time to soften and extinguish the prejudice and dislike and misgivings we had not scrupled to express in one shape or another.

As Gordon had charge of the deck until four o'clock in the afternoon, I endeavoured to ascertain from him what the men thought of the

captain's treatment of the half-blood ; but he was very shy and wary, and I believe would not have conversed with me upon the subject at all had it not been for the sort of kindness our chat on the previous night had established between us. His reply was to the effect that the crew were cautious in what they said before him, but that as far as he could gather, the securing of the man to the mast had raised a very strong feeling against the captain and mate ; and he said he believed it was only because the culprit was a foreigner that they suffered him to remain in that posture of indignity and pain. " Had he been an Englishman," he added, " my opinion is that they'd have gone on cutting him adrift as fast as the capt'n could seize him up."

The fellow still stood at the mast, bound as I have already described. Thus he had been standing since some time before nine o'clock in the morning. Whether the crew had at any time of the day fed him or put a drink to his lips I could not know ; but though it was not three o'clock in the afternoon when I made these observations, the man already—that is to say after seven hours or thereabouts—exhibited

such signs of weakness and distress that one would have said he was merely kept upon his feet by the ropes round his body. I never longed in all my life for anything so heartily as for the power to cast the unhappy creature adrift and send him below for a warm meal ; but I had spoken out freely and done my best, and more was not to be thought of, though I vowed in my heart, as I saw the unhappy creature wearily pass his hands over his eyes, and drop his chin on to his breast as if his neck could not support the burthen of his head, that if redress was to be obtained for him from such machinery of law as I might find flourishing at Rio I would not spare my purse to procure it.

The wind blew strong throughout the day. Indeed before six o'clock it had freshened into half a gale ; the topgallant-sails had been furled, and the brig swept roaring through it under reefed topsails and foresail. The height of the seas which chased us might have made a man think himself in the middle of the Atlantic. Each billow rolled under us with the weight of the ocean surge, and it was hard to realize that we were still in the narrow waters. The sky'

had settled into that high, hard stratification of greenish-gray cloud, with a dark streak in places, compact and apparently motionless, which nearly always signifies wind, and as a rule plenty of it. The brig steered wildly, and the perspiration poured from the face of the man at the helm as he swung to the wheel, putting it down and up, whilst every floating rush of the fabric off the liquid brows brought the seas boiling about her quarters, till the curl of the yeast there would sometimes be flush with the rail. At sunset the wildness of the glory was more like the rising of the luminary on a stormy December morning, when the heavens open and shut with snow-squalls, than his descent on a summer's night. The heavens flushed to a furnace-glow—an angry, smoking crimson, lightening into pink zenithwards, and thence floating away in rose into the very heart of the east. But the sea kept its dark green colour, and the run of its frothing peaks from one shining line to another made the glow of the firmament as startling as an unreality by the contrast.

Miss Grant remained in the cabin. At the meal called by the captain "supper" I had

begged her to come on deck, telling her that Broadwater (and I fixed my eyes on him as I spoke) had promised to free the man during the second dog-watch.

"When he is released I will go on deck, Mr. Musgrave," she said, "but not before. Such a sight is more than I can bear, and indeed it is miserable enough to be down here and feel that the man is still suffering."

"He isn't suffering, mum," said Broadwater; "he'd laugh at you for supposin' it. The calling of the sea turns sailors' skins into hides, and their feelings into horns. If it didn't there'd be no seamen left, for they'd all die off of consumption and other delicate complaints. I've told Mr. Musgrave that to accommodate you the man shall be lubberated in the second dog-watch, and that means eight bells; and obliged he ought to be, for by thunder! mistress, if it hadn't been for the consarn you're under about him I'd have kept him there till eight o'clock in the first watch to-morrow morning!"

Well, by remaining below she missed not only a fine and wondrous scene of sundown, but as gallant and stirring a sea-piece as it was

ever my fortune to view. For whilst the sun, hidden as he was, hung, as I might suppose, some four or five degrees above the horizon, a cloud of canvas loomed up almost dead astern. The brig was swarming through it at not less than eight or nine knots, and yet here was a ship growing out of the olive-coloured welter as though in very truth she was the rising moon. She was a large black American clipper, fresh from the Thames, with canvas white as cotton, and she had every cloth abroad, with the exception of her mizen-royal and her fore and main skysails. The press was prodigious ; one looked to see the great, swelling, soft white fabric flashing into a thousand fragments, and melting away upon the roar of the gale like snow-flakes. Her speed was not less than fifteen knots in the hour ; I judged it so by comparing her approach with our progress. All forward she was smothered to the spritsail-yard ; but at irregular intervals she shot her long black shape clear of the dazzle and fury about her bows, but only to smite the trough with a blow that hurled up a very storm of white waters, until you would have taken her to be a ship sweeping through the first gatherings

of a waterspout. She passed us close, flying along as though we were at anchor, and her passage was that of a thunderstorm for the sound of the gale in her canvas, for the rain-like hissing all about her sides, and for the multitudinous shrieking of the wind in her rigging, resonant as fiddle-strings to the enormous strain put upon every shroud, backstay, and brace.

Broadwater gazed at her with an inimitable air of astonishment. I saw him looking up at his own canvas, and then over the stern of the brig at the wake there, as though he could not persuade himself that the great clipper yonder carried the same weight of wind under which the Iron Crown was staggering. In a few minutes her elliptical stern was upon us, with swift upward heavings of the gleaming gilt-work upon it, till the letters of her name showed glaring over her rudder, and with flying plunges and slow majestic rollings, the stately fabric swep onwards with the gloom into the west, until presently she was as visionary in the liquid obscurity ahead as the creaming of the seas there.

On eight bells being struck, Broadwater,

who was standing near the wheel, bawled out, "Mr. Gordon, cast that there Ernest Charles adrift from the foremast, and tell him to lay aft!"

I wondered what the captain meant to say to the unfortunate wretch, whose long punishment certainly did not need the topping off of a round of abuse; but finding he did not appear, I crossed the deck and observed a group of seamen collected at the foot of the mast. On approaching I saw the figure of the half-blood prone upon his back.

"What ails the man, Mr. Gordon?" said I; "has he fainted?"

"It's exhaustion, I allow," he answered.

"He's been belayed too taut—enough to prize his heart out of its moorings," exclaimed one of the sailors in a gruff voice.

"There's a flask of brandy in my cabin," I exclaimed. "Where's the boy? He'll find it."

At this moment the mate arrived. "What's the trouble now?" he called out in his shrill, fierce voice.

"Charles is in a swoond," responded the boatswain.

The mate bent his back, and looked into the face of the prostrate man. The twilight was still abroad, but the gloom of the night, darkened yet by the shadow of vapour that overspread the sky, was fast deepening, and it was already difficult to distinguish objects.

“Up you get!” shouted the mate, suddenly springing erect, with a sharp kick at the recumbent form. “There’s no shamming allowed aboard this brig. Up with you! Up with you!”

He kicked him again and yet again, and then, as fiercely as a madman would throw himself upon another, clutched the man about the collar, and ran his back against the foremast sheer on to his feet.

I expected to see him fall, but whether he was actually shamming, as the mate declared, or had been brought to by Mr. Bothwell’s kicks and handling, he opened his eyes and kept his feet, though he swayed against the mast, and I do not doubt would have fallen but for the support of it.

“Aft with you!” cried the mate; “the captain wants a word with you before you go below.”

“He’d better be helped aft,” said the boatswain ; “small wonder if he should have lost the use of his legs.”

“Aft with you !” persisted the mate.

The inhumanity of the fellow was maddening. “Murder him at once !” I cried ; “it would be kinder !”

The mate did not answer, did not even look round at me. One of the sailors muttered something ; I did not catch the words, but the growl had a very ugly note in it. The half-blood made a step, reeled, and fell heavily. I walked aft sick at heart, but ere I had made a few paces I heard the mate exclaim, “Take him below, then, take him below !” and passing me he joined the captain, and they fell to pacing the deck together.

The night was damp, and the force of the wind put an edge of cold into it. There was nothing to court Miss Grant on deck nor to detain me there ; so I spent the rest of the evening with her in the cabin, though conversation after a time grew somewhat laborious, owing to the dismal creakings and groanings in the heart of the hull as it strained from hollow

to summit, and groaned again to the stormy sweep of the blast into the iron-hard canvas aloft. I told my companion that the half-blood had been freed and taken below, but said nothing about the brutality of the mate nor the condition the man appeared in, whether actual or affected, when released from the mast.

And indeed I do not know that I should have entered so closely into these particulars, but for the obligation I am under to exhibit the causes which led to the extraordinary adventures I shall have to relate before I bring this narrative to a conclusion. At the same time, as pictures of the sea-life are so seldom attempted, and as the secret history of the merchant-sailor is so little understood, I cannot but think it proper that all forms of the vocation, whether sunny or sombre, whether elevating or debasing, should, in the interests of the mariner, be described by those who have an acquaintance with the calling, and who are able to plainly write down their recollections and experiences. I am happy to know that many of the old forms of inhumanity on shipboard

are extinct, or fast decaying ; yet enough survives to render, I am sorry to say, even such a sketch as I have attempted true in many respects of much that happens in the sailing-ship of to-day. The coarse, unprincipled skipper still flourishes ; mates of the Bothwell pattern still are to be found in plenty ; and though the condition of the sailor has been improved and fortified by laws which had no existence in the days of which I am writing, his grievances yet remain sufficiently abundant to render even a recurrence to the usages and practices of half a century ago useful to him at the present moment as much that continues habitual to his hard, toilsome, hazardous and unrepresented vocation. But to proceed.

The wind blew fresh all that night, and did not fail us until we had put twenty leagues between us and the Scilly Islands. It then fell light and drew ahead, and forced us upon a bowline, and for twenty-four hours we were staggering most abominably upon a long swell, with a true Biscayan sweep in the run of it ; wrinkled with the wind, but foamless ; swollen enough to fetch a harsh voice of small ordnance from the

canvas that it swayed into violent slaps against the masts, and into short blasts like explosions with the sudden rounding-out of the cloths. Affairs on board seemed to run during this while pretty smoothly. I saw the half-blood named Charles at work on the day following the night of his release, and I do not know that old Broadwater made further trouble of the matter for which the fellow had been punished. The notion, or perhaps the hope rather, grew in me that he meant to soften somewhat his truculent treatment of the men. I had indeed spoken very plainly, and I took it that he had turned my words over in his mind when he was not too fuddled with liquor to think coherently, and had determined not to put it in my power to create a difficulty for him at Rio or on his return home. The mate, too, seemed disposed to quiet down, as if he had got his cue from the captain. It is true that he could never hail a man aloft, or call him when on deck, without an exasperating note of quite unnecessary temper in the fling of his voice. But it seemed to me as if he was no longer incessantly on the lookout for something to fly in a rage over. I sus-

pected however that both he and Broadwater moderated their behaviour only when Miss Grant and I were on deck. At all events the ship's work seemed to be carried on without much fret and jar ; yet, whether it was because the old sailorly instincts in me sharpened my sympathies, or because I feared that the conduct of the captain and his mate had already raised a devil forward, which even the quieter bearing of such men as they was not likely to lay, I confess I could never look at the crew without seeming sensible of an indefinable air amongst them which I can best convey by speaking of it as a sort of morose uneasiness.

Broadwater, I am bound to say, showed no sulkiness towards us for our plain speaking and dealing. You would have thought there had been no trouble whatever between us had you heard him praising the meals at table, bragging of his old experiences, boasting of his brig as though she was the loveliest frigate then afloat, and so forth. As to the mate, we gave him so wide a berth that often a whole day passed without our exchanging a sentence with him. The only companionable creature aboard was

Gordon, in whose quarter-deck walk I was always glad to join when the night came round that gave him the first watch as we call it at sea—that is, from eight to twelve. Naturally Miss Grant and I were very much together. This, to be sure, was unavoidable ; but I own that I would get a bit troubled in my mind when, after turning in and extinguishing the lamp, I found my imagination haunted by her fine eyes, her noble figure, and above all by a certain sweetness in the tone of her voice that would at all times, long after she was silent, linger upon my ear like a memory of glad and gentle music. I sometimes said to myself, Suppose I fall in love with her ? It would be impossible to conceive of a more inconvenient passion. It was idle to argue with myself and pretend that I need not fall in love with her unless I chose. Reason might talk very soberly about such a thing, but my instincts knew better. In short, not being able to make sure of myself in this direction, I arrived at the conclusion that I had acted as a fool in consenting to lock myself up in a small brig with a handsome woman whose heart was another's, and to the fascination of whose person

and manners I was expected to oppose as immovable a countenance as old Broadwater's. Had there been other passengers we might have made shift, for considerable intervals at all events, to manage without one another's company; but we were alone—a condition of the voyage I cannot say I had seriously contemplated or even lightly thought of before embarking on this adventure—and the result was we were incessantly together. I had purchased a chess-board and a pack or two of cards, and when the deck bored us, or the weather there was uncomfortable, we would sit down and play a game in the cabin; and I say it was difficult for me to be hour after hour and day after day encountering her spirited, sparkling glances, watching her smiles, listening to her graceful fancies, observing the fifty fascinating elegances of her posture and movements, without thinking a very great deal more about her when I was alone, and perhaps even when I was in her company, than my honour could approve or my judgment understand.

CHAPTER X.

A MIDNIGHT ALARM.

WE had been eight days out when I met with a very unpleasant experience. The brig was still on the Spanish parallels. The night had come down moonless and dark, and the vessel, close-hauled under all plain sail, was quietly rippling over the breathing surface of the sea, with lines of delicate green fire breaking from her cut water to abreast of the gangway, where they trembled out into the deep blackness there. The air was damp with dew, and as Miss Grant was below and there was nobody on the quarter-deck but the mate, I flung my cheroot overboard, and entered the cabin. There I found my companion with a book in her hand, trying to read by the light of the lamp, whose swaying

to the movements of the brig bothered the eye with a flitting of shadows. Broadwater was at his usual place at the table, with a bottle of rum and a steaming glass before him. He sat apparently lost in thought, with one eye shut and the other fixed upon the lamp, his little mouth rounded into the familiar whistling shape, his pear-shaped nose as ruddy as the liquor in the bottle, and the expression on his face indescribably absurd with its rubicund cast of tipsy sentiment.

"Have a glass of rum and water, Mr. Musgrave?" he said to me, with a stupid smile, pointing with a drooping finger to the tumbler before him, yet speaking as if the silence had grown oppressive and he was glad to break it.

I declined, and asked Miss Grant what she was reading. Before she could answer, Broadwater said, "Beg pardon, Mr. Musgrave, but can you tell me if you're a married man, sir?"

"I certainly *can* tell you," I replied, bursting into a laugh; "I am not married. Are you?"

“Yes, sir,” he answered, “and I wish I wasn’t. She’s a nice young lady, but,” he added gloomily, “I don’t like her mother, sir. That there mother of hers is always interfering; and what’s worse, she’s got no respect for me.” His hand wandered somewhat aimlessly towards his glass, which he presently grasped, half emptied, and replaced with a heavy sigh. “Mr. Musgrave,” he went on, “you’ll excuse me, sir, if you please. You’ll be marrying some of these days—bound to it—an’ I’d strongly recommend ye to take Capt’n Broadwater’s advice—the advice of old Guy Broadwater, who’s as well known from Freshwharf down to Blackwall as the Monument is, or the dome of St. Paul’s: don’t you go and get married to a party that’s got a mother. If you do, you’ll find you’ve gone and married ’em both. There’s nothing as weighs upon a man’s feelings like his wife’s mother. You mind, sir. Remember what I says, and you’ll recall this voyage as the one sarcumstance of your life that was the making of ye.”

He drained his glass, and pulling out his

great silver watch, that seemed to pop from his trousers'-band like a cork from a bottle, he cast an uncertain glance at it, and rose with a succession of nods at me, whilst he said, "Recollect Capt'n Broadwater's advice, sir : it'll be the making of ye," fell about a little whilst he replaced the bottle in the locker, and then, saluting Miss Grant with a tipsy smile, lurched towards his cabin, talking to himself as he went, the burthen of his words being, as far as I could collect it, "Take my advice, Mr. Musgrave ; it'll be the making of ye."

As he was nightly in the habit of withdrawing to his cabin more or less overtaken with liquor, we had by this time grown used to the practice, had come indeed to view it as part of the navigation of the *Iron Crown*, and had therefore nothing to say about it now. We sat talking for half an hour or so : Miss Grant then went to bed ; and after smoking my pipe in the companion - hatchway, from which sheltered point I took notice of the heavy gloom amid which the ship was sailing—a shadow so thickened with the deep dusk of the night, through which here and there a star

glanced haggard and sparely, that the fabric of spar and canvas was invisible from half the height of the mainmast—I descended to my berth, and, to use the proper nautical expression, “turned in.”

On extinguishing the light and pulling the blankets over me, I found my mind somewhat threateningly active. Maybe I was a bit nervous; why, I knew not, unless I harked back to Broadwater’s supper and dinner-table, in whose dishes indeed reasons might be found for an intellectual condition only a little short of lunacy. I fell to thinking of the captain’s being in liquor, of the blackness through which the brig was stemming, of our safety being dependent upon the vigilance of the mate, who, for all I knew, might be snoring on his back on the skylight or on a hencoop, whilst the man at the wheel lurched there with eyelids of lead and his chin upon his breast. Now and again came the long-drawn sobbing sounds of water washing along the bends close against where my head lay, with a note of yearning in the small roar of its passage that set me thinking of the cold death in the liquid pro-

found under our keel, and of the slenderness of the structure of plank, tree-nail, and beam, which was our only barricade against the intrusion of the spectre. Then Miss Grant came into my head, and the thought of her beauty put a sort of light into my mood, though my fancies continued to hang in a nervous jumble upon my mind. However, after a while I fell asleep, and lay dreamless for some time, as I believe; and may have rested so for an hour or more, when I had a hideous nightmare. I dreamt that the cabin-door was suddenly flung open, and that Captain Broadwater entered with his eyes on fire and his face blood-red with drink. He grasped the immense carving-knife he was in the habit of flourishing at table, and approached me close. Whence came the light by which I viewed him I know not; but he was horribly distinguishable. He seemed to say, and I quite understood him, that it was his intention to murder me because I wished to leave his ship; but that, as his hatred of me was too intense to suffer him to despatch me quickly, it was his intention to destroy me by degrees. I lay

paralyzed, tried to bawl out, but could utter no sound, endeavoured to stir, but felt as dead as a log of wood. Agony at length broke the spell; I awoke, sprang into a sitting posture, with the perspiration pouring from my face, and stared, panting as if I had been wounded to death, into the blackness of the cabin.

As I sat peering and endeavouring to collect my senses, I heard the sound of what resembled a human groan. It seemed to come from the floor of my cabin. I was still suffering from the agitation caused by my nightmare; and my nerves having been unduly wrung, whilst I had scarcely yet had time to recollect myself, I confess that this strange and alarming noise filled me with so much consternation that I felt almost as helpless as when Broadwater stood beside me in the vision. The extraordinary noise was repeated; I could not doubt my hearing. It rose from the deck under my bunk, and was so exceedingly like the groan of a drunken man in pain that I thought to myself, Good God! there may be more in my dream than I am as yet conscious of!

The sense of the presence of a real danger

served to rally me. My tinder-box—I had no other means of procuring a light—was in the pocket of my coat that hung near the door, and it was necessary to get out of bed to obtain it. I threw my legs over the edge of the bunk, intending to very warily slide round by the bulkhead to where the coat was, that I might not tread upon whatever the object might be that groaned upon the deck, when the noise sounded again—a thick, snoring, choking moan. I whipped my legs into my bunk, much more alarmed than it pleases me to confess. Great mercy! thought I, is it conceivable that Broadwater in a drunken fit has *really* entered this cabin with the design of murdering me, and that the liquor he has swallowed has proved too potent at the last moment to enable him to execute his horrid project! If he has a knife in his hand, I reflected, starting as another groan arose, I may stumble over him in groping and fall upon the blade; or if I should roll over him he might not be too drunk to imagine that I was attacking him, when of course he would defend himself and perhaps kill me.

Another groan determined me. This must end, thought I, come what will; and with that I slipped over the edge of my bunk, but instead of touching the deck my feet pressed upon a soft, naked, hairy body. Before I could cry out, the thing started up with a savage squeal and threw me down. It ran over me, but my fright was so great that I had not the least idea whether it was man or beast, until, putting out my hands to protect myself, I grasped a curly tail, to my drag upon which the pig—for a beast of a pig it was!—responded by making his nature known in a series of ear-piercing squealings. I groped for the door, found it open and swinging to the movement of the vessel, and feeling for the hook secured it backwards against the bulk-head. I then sought for and tumbled into my small-clothes; but whilst moving with my arms outstretched to where I thought I should find my coat I fell over the pig again. I was now as angry as I had before been frightened; in truth I was not a little bruised with my falls, and my temper was still further inflamed by the distracting cries of the pig whenever I

struck against it. Miss Grant opened her door. She had lighted her lamp, and fearing that the beast would make for her, I cried out : " It's only a pig. I'll have him out of this in a minute. Shut your door quickly, or he'll run in upon you." She instantly did as I told her, but a moment after I could hear her laughing as though she had fallen hysterical.

I stepped cautiously towards the passage, and found the door that shut off the after-accommodation from the state-cabin closed. But for this, I should have had light enough from the reflection of the dimmed lantern that swung in the cabin to have seen by. By sliding my hands about I succeeded in feeling the handle of the door, which I opened ; but the moment the light streamed in the pig ran for it, and striking me on the legs as it swept past, threw me again to the deck. The cabin-skylight was opened, and the voice of some one above called to me. I could just distinguish the features of the boatswain, but before I could tell him what was the matter, Broadwater, followed by the mate, came running out from their berths in the fore end.

“What is it? what is it?” shouted the old skipper. “Anybody being murdered?”

But the mate’s swiftly rolling eye instantly caught sight of the pig, at which he made a spring. The creature with a prodigious squeal slipped, as though its back had been greased, out of his grip, and with a wild kick-up of its hind-quarters, and a defiant flourish of its tail, made in a gallop in the direction of the captain, through whose bow-legs it bolted, bringing him down as if he had been shot. By this time the boatswain, peering through the skylight and seeing how it was, had ordered some of the men of his watch to jump below and catch the pig, and down they trundled, four of them, filled with anticipations of a fine bout of skylarking—for Jack dearly loves a pig-hunt. The uproar was now prodigious. The pig raced round the cabin and under the table yelling like a steam-horn to every clutch that was made at it; and after it went the sailors, tumbling, swearing, laughing, whilst the mate shouted to them in a shrill voice to bear a hand and catch the brute. Old Broadwater, who appeared somewhat dazed by his fall, sat upon

a locker rubbing the back of his head, now and again lifting his clenched fist as the pig galloped past him, and heaping curses upon the thing in a half-smothered tone. The men however enjoyed the sport too keenly to be in a hurry to end it, and a full five minutes of roaring, puffing, laughing, and squeaking passed before the pig was captured. It was then carried away by the fellows, one of whom, it seemed to me, must have tormented it in some secret manner, for the squealing of the beast as it was borne up the ladder and along the deck was so violent and sharp-edged that it might have been heard a league distant.

Scarce had these distracting notes been silenced, and just as I was about to put a question to Captain Broadwater—for talk was not to be dreamt of whilst that noise lasted—I heard the boatswain on deck cry out in a loud and fearful tone, “Hard up! Hard up! Over with it, man, for our lives!” and then an instant after, “Ship ahoy!” he roared, with the same note of violent hurry and sense of danger in his voice, “Port your hellum! port your hellum, or you’ll be into us!”

The mate gained the deck in a couple of leaps : Broadwater followed him as though he had been whipped up by a tackle ; and forgetting that I was without shoes or stockings, clad in nothing indeed but a shirt and trousers, I shot up the ladder to see what was the matter. It took my eyes some moments to get used to the gloom, for there was sheen enough in the cabin to turn the night black as a wolf's throat when you rose out of the companion-hatch into it ; then close upon our starboard-bow, as it seemed to me, I spied a light oscillating, as though passionately flourished, and I could just distinguish a huge black shadow there like a deeper dye of blackness upon the liquid dusk that overhung the ocean. A minute after, close by the first light up sprang a second—a sea-torch of turpentine, the long sickly flame of which streamed away into smoke, though it had power enough to palely colour a small circumference of atmosphere, out of which there stole glimmering to the illumination the rigging and lower canvas of a big ship. She loomed

up so close aboard that the sight was something to hold a man breathless.

In the brief interval of silence that followed the boatswain's cry to her to port her helm, I could distinctly hear the hiss and splash of the curl of water breaking at her stem ; the voice of a man rapidly delivering orders as though for life or death ; the rattle of tiller-chains to the swift revolution of the wheel ; the flap of some light sail aloft buried in the black void, hollowing inwards as the ship, answering her helm, rounded to the wind. One moment she was off our bow, the next abreast of us, so close that the face of the man holding the streaming flare-tin glimmered out yellow as the rind of a ripe lime ; and as he leaned from the bulwark-rail, torch in hand, swinging at arm's length from a backstay, the figure of him upon the yellow atmosphere of light was for all the world like a human shape wrought in black silk upon a ground of rusty amber. I cowered involuntarily, believing the stranger's jibbooms to be over us, and expecting every minute to hear the rending and crashing of masts and

strong fastenings to the sheering sweep of those outstretched spars. She was soon on our quarter, and then it was possible to fetch a breath; though even when there, you *felt* her terrifying presence in the oppression of the vast shadow of her black heights upon the dusk. Presently the flare over her side went out—the blotch she made melted into the general shadow—and then she was as utterly gone from the sight, though but a few cables' lengths distant, as though she had foundered.

By this time Broadwater had recovered his faculties, and he now let fly a whole hurricane of questions at the boatswain; demanding to know how it was that the vessel had not been sighted sooner, whether there was a man forward on the look-out, and the like. But neither rage nor rum could blind him to the almost preternatural gloom of the night. Indeed it was like being in a vault. One or two stars showed faint as the dimmest of their own reflections, and it staggered one to see them, so unreal was their wan gleam. What had become of the moon I do not know. The outline of the brig met the blackness without a break, and

though I stood within a couple of yards of the boatswain and Broadwater, I should not have known there were people near me but for their voices. Gordon answered the skipper quietly, said that he had been keeping as bright a look-out as was practicable to mortal sight on such a night, but that, had he had as many eyes in his head as a peacock carries in its tail, and each eye a telescope at *that*, it would have been all the same; to which old Broadwater answered with a growling, "Well, boil me, if it ain't so!" and after that cooled down and spoke rationally.

But just before I went below I heard Gordon exclaim, "It was the crying of the pig, sir, that made our presence known. The ship heard it, and showed a light, guessing there was some craft close aboard. If it hadn't been for that squeaking, I allow that we should have been on the road to the bottom before this."

CHAPTER XI.

A TRAGEDY.

You will believe, after hearing the boat swain's remark to the captain, that I was no longer disposed to make a trouble of the invasion of my berth by the pig. A trifle light as air will at sea, and often in an instant, become as solemn and as serious a thing as doom. I returned to the cabin cold from the deck, with the chill moreover in me that a sudden danger and swift release will put into a man, and going to my berth I thrust my feet into a pair of warm slippers, wrapped a dressing-gown about me, and re-entered the cabin with a bottle of brandy in my hand for the comfort of a dram. I was waiting for the arrival of Broadwater, desiring to gather, though without temper, how the pig had made

its way aft, when I was surprised by Miss Grant peeping through the door that led to our berths, and then advancing.

"I expected you would be up, Mr. Musgrave," she exclaimed, seating herself at my side; "what a noisy time this has been! Far more alarming indeed than the commotion the other night when the poor man committed suicide. I have really felt frightened."

Yet she did not look so. Her eyes were as steady, her lips as composed, her manner as quiet as ever they had been in the tranquildest hour we had passed together since our first meeting. Her hair, roughened by the pillow, made her beauty the more striking for the disorder of it upon her white forehead and whiter neck. It was no moment to take notice of such trifles, but it seemed to me that this woman could never look more fascinating than when newly and hastily arisen from her couch, and hurriedly attired in a pink dressing-gown!

I related my story of the adventure with the pig, at which she laughed continuously, until I came to tell her of our narrow escape, and how, under Heaven, an incident that would

seem merry enough to everybody but the person who took part in it, was the cause of our escape from a catastrophe that might have sent every soul of us to the bottom ; and then she grew very grave.

“ It needs an effort of mind,” said I, “ to conceive of the genius of luck taking upon itself the aspect of a pig. Henceforward I shall think respectfully of Broadwater’s affection for roast and boiled pork.”

“ I wish this voyage were over, Mr. Musgrave,” she exclaimed. “ I feel as if we had already passed a couple of months at sea. Do you think if the ship had run into us we should have been drowned ? ”

“ Impossible to say, Miss Grant. She was a lump of a craft, to judge by the huge loom of her shadow ; and I fear that, staunch as the Iron Crown may be, one thrust from that big chap would have made old staves of the little hooker.”

At this moment Broadwater’s bow legs appeared in the companion-way. Down he came, pulling off his hat as he arrived. Sleep, and the turmoil of the pig-hunt, and the alarm

he was fresh from, had cleared his head, and he was as sober as one could wish.

“Rather late for you to be a-sitting up, miss,” said he approaching the table; “there’s no longer call to be afraid. It’ll be all plain sailing now for the rest of the night.”

“What time is it, captain?” she inquired.

He pulled out his watch—“weighed it” would be the correct term, for it was like breaking out an anchor—and said, “Close upon four bells—two o’clock, mum. Is that there bottle yours, Mr. Musgrave?”

I replied that it was, and grasping the hint conveyed by the question, begged him to help himself. He smacked his lips to the draught, for the brandy was of my own buying, choice and old, and said: “A close shave that just now, sir. I don’t know that I ever remember a darker night, considering it’s fine weather.”

“Ay,” said I, “dark it is; much too dark for human eyesight, as your second mate truly said. ’Tis fortunate that we are endowed with other faculties than vision only. Had there not been ears aboard the stranger to catch the squeaking of my pig where should we be now?”

“How could the pig have got into the cabin?” exclaimed Miss Grant.

“Why,” answered Captain Broadwater, “he must have broken out of his sty under the long-boat, and grubbed along quietly in the darkness until he comes to the companion-way, down which he rolls, courted, maybe, by a smell of feedin’. All hands of us aft being asleep, as I allow, there was nobody to hear him. But if that there door was shut,” he added, pointing, “I don’t see how the pig was to get into your passage; and supposing *your* door to have been shut, how was he to enter your cabin?”

It seems however that the door that conducted to the passage had been left open and unhooked, so that it was likely the pig, in grubbing about, had given it a shove with its snout and slammed it to. But how the creature contrived to enter my cabin, the door of which I remember having shut, I was at a loss to imagine, until, going presently to fetch a cheroot—for I was absolutely sleepless and was in the habit of smoking whenever it pleased me in the cabin, with Miss Grant’s good leave, of course—I examined the latch of the door of my

berth, and observed that the tongue caught so thinly that it yielded to the slightest pressure.

I think Broadwater would have gone straightway to bed had it not been for my brandy-bottle. Miss Grant protested that she felt too restless to return to her cabin, and said she wished it were daylight.

“The dawn’ll soon be coming along, miss,” said the captain; “meantime, what’s there to be uneasy about now?”

“The lady is not uneasy, captain,” said I, “her rest has been broken, and she no longer feels sleepy;” and I wondered that even his little eyes should not have observed her composed and tranquil expression. Indeed it seemed to me that what uneasiness there was lay altogether in *him*. His manner was subdued, he spoke with a note of respect; there was that in his bearing which suggested that the weight of his alarm had not yet lifted, and I would see him sometimes shoot a look at the companion or up at the skylight, and then thoughtfully stroke down his nose, whilst his little eyes met in a squint upon the glass around which his carrot-shaped fingers were curled.

He was too much of a seaman not to know that we had all of us come off just now very narrowly indeed with our lives ; and though, as I have said, he would no doubt have gone to bed but for the brandy, he could not sit there and reflect upon what had occurred without indications of discomposure, which contrasted strongly with Miss Grant's reposeful expression, steadfast eyes, and calm, sweet utterance.

And yet from the few words she had let fall, I was sure that she had mastered the full significance of the danger we had escaped as completely as if she had witnessed the scene—as completely indeed as if she had been as practical a sailor as the captain himself. Once she lifted her finger to the light moan of a sea running stealthily along the side against which we were leaning, and exclaimed : “ How cold the sound is there ! I remember once telling Alexander that qualities sensible to the touch may also be so to the hearing. He did not understand me ; but surely, Mr. Musgrave, isn't the icy breath of a winter's blast, as it sweeps past the window, as perceptible to the

ear as it would be to the face if one should look out of doors?"

"I find nothing hard to understand in that fancy," I replied; meanly willing, I fear, to exhibit my understanding as in some senses superior to her Alexander's. "I once saw a man lying dead in a posture of terror—he had died with a shriek, I learned; but I did not need to be told *that*, for I could *see* his cry in the attitude, though Death's forefinger had been upon his lips for twenty-four hours."

"A queer sort of twisting of the faculties, ain't it, sir?" exclaimed old Broadwater; "to *see* a shriek, and *hear* cold weather! That's a kind of boiling above most men's intellectuals, I should think. With your good leave, Mr. Musgrave, I'll take another drop, sir. Good old Jamaiky, as a standing drink, is to my taste unsurpassable by any sort o' liquor to be found in the first nobleman's cellar in the country; but a drop of brandy after this here pattern is an agreeable change, and I've heard," he continued, helping himself, "that an occasional variation is recom-

mended by the doctors as sarviceable to the liver. Your health, sir ; miss, to you."

He nodded with more complacency than I had ever witnessed in him when not in his cups and sighed with satisfaction after drinking.

I thought I would take advantage of his mood to put in a good word for his crew, and said, "Your fellows seem a lively lot—true Jacks when it comes to a bout of skylarking. Did you notice how they relished the pig-hunt ? I should say there's nothing to be afraid of in men who possess their capacity of enjoying little things."

I had scarce uttered these words when, through the silence that followed, and through the whole length and breadth of the brig, as it seemed to me, there rang out so wild and shrill a cry of human anguish, that the like of it I could never imagine deliverable by human lips. You would have sworn it was a woman's voice, and had not Miss Grant been by my side I must have thought it was she—as the only one of her sex on board—who had uttered it.

"Great Heavens !" I cried, "what has happened ?"

Broadwater had started to his feet at the sound, but he then appeared to be stricken helpless, for he stood staring with a sort of gape in the set of his lips towards the companion-ladder. Miss Grant's face was full of consternation, and she kept her eyes fixed on me with a wild look of consternation in them. I listened, expecting to hear a second cry. There was a sound of swift running overhead ; a sharp, angry shout in the voice of the boatswain ; a minute after the chief mate came staggering down the ladder with his hand to his side, his dark face dreadful to see with the ghastly colouring upon it. He stood whilst you could have counted ten at the foot of the ladder, swaying, his left hand upon his heart, his right hand extended, his ashen lips inarticulately moving ; then dropped without a groan, and lay motionless.

A voice halloa'd on deck. I could not catch the words, but it was easy to recognize Gordon's tone, and it seemed to me that he was bawling for assistance from the wheel, or close to it. The light burnt dully in the cabin lantern ; I turned the mesh high that we might

see what was the matter with the mate, and then went up to him. He lay on his side, and when I looked at his face I could not question that he was dead. He had run from the cabin in his shirt and trousers on hearing the squealing of the pig, and in that attire had bounded on deck when the boatswain's sudden cry had raised the alarm of collision, and thus was he habited as he lay—a clearly murdered man—at the foot of the cabin steps. His left side was dark in the lamplight with the saturation of blood, and already there was a large dusky patch slowly sifting out, like ink upon blotting-paper, over the sand-coloured planks on which the man rested. His head was uncovered, his eyes half closed, his lips had not yet had time to soften down out of the rigours of their grinning twist of agony and terror; the gleam of his white teeth was as though he snarled, spite of his lying still. God knows, handsome as the lineaments were, it was now a face as villainous for the wrinkled torment and fierce sneer about the mouth, and the sly brutality of the half-closed eyes, and the savageness of the woolly hair, that even in life when all was

well with him was enough to repel most sorts of sympathy, as imagination could depicture. I know that the memory of it, with its base accentuation of stained deck and dyed shirt, haunted me for years, and the thing is before me at this moment, though without the old horror.

This is a passage that takes some time to describe, though the interval between the dropping of the killed man and my bending over him was to have been spanned by twenty or thirty seconds. Broadwater appeared to have been bereft of reason. A professional danger—the thundering down of a squall catching him aback, a big ship under a press close aboard him, white water under the bows—might have found him equal to its confrontation. The vocational instincts would have gone to work, and preserved him from gaping like a fool. But here was something wide of his experience, a sudden violent shock—a frightful menace in its way, too, for it was impossible to say what greater and blacker tragedy yet lay secret, but sure, behind this first and most bloody one.

I found Miss Grant at my side looking at the body, with a white face, indeed, but with a bearing perfectly collected and self-possessed.

"Mr. Musgrave," she said, in a quick yet firm voice, "what is to be done? Direct me: I am prepared to assist you in any way."

"So far as this man is concerned," I answered, pointing to the body, "there is nothing to be done. Look at his face. There is no virtue for him now in any stanching or dressing. He has been stabbed to the heart!"

She shuddered, and returned to her seat at the table.

"Captain!" I cried suddenly, angered by the posture of helplessness into which this business had struck him, "here is murder—murder, do you hear, sir? If your crew have not mutinied, what else should this signify? There is no leisure at sea, sir, for *goggling*. For God's sake go on deck, man, and find out what's the matter!"

Had I run at him with a pitchfork, the action could not have started him more effectually than my speech.

“Goggling! who’s a-goggling?” he roared. “By this and by that,” and here he bellowed out a whole volley of curses, “the man who’s done this thing shall swing for it! From my own yard-arm he shall swing for it, though there’s ne’er a pair of hands on board but mine to run the villain aloft! Murder! Murder aboard of *me*! Why, what do they hope to do? what’s their intention?”

He made for the companion-ladder with fury in his looks and gestures; but at that instant down thundered the second mate, with his face as white as its dark tincture of weather would suffer it to be, as wild in his manner as a demented man; so distractedly agitated that his quick, distressful breathing broke up his words as they rolled hoarsely from his lips, and it was with an effort you caught his meaning.

“Captain! captain!” he cried, “there’s been a murder done! The mate—ay, there he lies—stabbed, sir, stabbed by the half-blood Charles!”

“Where is he?” bellowed Broadwater, who had come to a stand on seeing the boatswain, but who now gathered himself together afresh for a spring on deck.

“Hold, sir!” cried Gordon, “hold! hear me out. For God Almighty’s sake deal with them as though an ill word *now* should tarn ’em all into wild beasts! Mr. Musgrave—sir—you’ve been to sea. You know that when sailor-men are ripe for mischief the sight and smell of blood will change the most peaceable of them into devils. Tell the captain this, sir! beg him to listen to me, sir, or there’ll be not a life of one of us now here collected as’ll stand the chance of that flame there if you was to try and blow it out.”

“Captain,” said I, half wild with the thoughts such talk as this put into my head, as I looked for an instant at Miss Grant to mark what effect the incoherent consternation of the boatswain produced upon her, “you must listen to this man. He has something to tell you. There are three of us; I have weapons of my own, and you will not be without arms. For God’s sake, don’t let the worst happen without preparation! Sit—be cool. There,” I cried, pointing to the body of the mate, “is something to warrant a cold debate!” and with that I grasped him by the arm, with a quick sense of

satisfaction coming to me, somehow or other, out of the feel of the mass of muscle my fingers gripped, and shoved him towards a locker. He sat down, with his face as dark as the stain on the cabin deck, without speaking, with a fixed glare of his little eyes at Gordon, and a kind of suffocated heaving of his breast.

“Now, Gordon!” I exclaimed.

The man had already grown somewhat calmer.

“Captain,” he said, “this is how it happened. Charles, the half-blood, was at the wheel. When you went below, the mate,” here he turned his eyes with a sickly roll upon the body, and a sharp catching of his breath, “came up to me, and talked of the craft that had nearly run us down. He spoke in a passion, gave me hard words—told me I had no eyes, wasn’t fit to take charge of the deck, and swore cruelly that he’d reckon his own eyesight to have been blasted if he’d have missed the shadow long afore they showed the binnacle light over the side. We argued, and I fell as hot as he. After a long spell of jawing he went forra’ds, and I heard him talking

to some of the men there. His words went with a snap in them—bitter hard words they was, sir!—a sight too fierce for flesh and blood; and the men took courage, I suppose from the blackness, and gave it him back, till forra'ds it grew into a whole growl of curses, and then," he continued with another sickening look at the figure, "he steps aft threatening them with a hundred work-up jobs for to-morrow. He comes up to me, and lets fly again. He talked as if he hadn't his right mind, and I tell ye that I peered for the gleam of a knife in his hand, dark as it was, for he acted as if he were going to run a muck. It was his watch below; there was nothing to keep him on deck; whilst, if I couldn't boast of his education, there was nothing on God's ocean in the seafaring line as he was competent to teach me." He cast another look of dismay and disgust at the dead man, and stopped to take breath.

Broadwater watched him with a fixed gaze. I was afraid he would interrupt the fellow, but he had fallen into his earlier posture of bewilderment and astonishment.

"I could follow him," continued Gordon,

“by the white of his shirt a-flitting about the deck, and after a bit he walks to the wheel where Charles was, and spoke to him. There was some muttering; then I heard *him*,” pointing with his finger at the body without looking at it, “talking shrill as a fishwife, whilst the half-blood answered sulkily, as a man struggling with his temper; and this went on till of a sudden Mr. Bothwell made the cry ye must have heard, and before I could run aft he had slipped to the companion, where I lost sight of him. I found the wheel deserted. The half-blood had gone forward in the murky blackness along the line of the larboard bulwarks, and though I noticed the slapping of shoes, yet, not seeing him, I supposed he was still at the helm. I halloa’d for some one to lay aft and take the wheel. The moment he came, I says, ‘Where’s Charles?’ ‘In the fo’k’sle,’ he answers. ‘What’s he done?’ says I, for I couldn’t guess at the truth of the matter from the noise of Mr. Bothwell’s yell. ‘He’s knifed the mate,’ says he. ‘How do you know that?’ says I. ‘Why,’ he says, ‘afore dropping down the scuttle he sings out,

‘Nat—Dan—Terence—is there e’er a one of you on deck?’ ‘*I am,*’ says I, who was standing close. ‘By God!’ says he, ‘the mate’ll trouble us no more; my knife has found his heart out! It’ll be the skipper’s turn next!’”

Broadwater started to his feet.

“For Heaven’s sake, hear him out!” I cried; “time may be precious; how on earth shall we know what to do unless we get the truth ”

The skipper had lifted his arm with a frenzied gesture, and would have plunged, spite of my entreaty, into one of his now familiar roaring bouts; but happily he was half-suffocated by rage and terror, and scarcely able to articulate. He continued to watch the boatswain, whilst his extended arm fell to his side.

“When I heard this,” continued Gordon, throwing a look up the companion-ladder as if he suspected listeners there, “I went forrards, put my head into the scuttle, and called to Charles. He answered without showing himself. I says, ‘In God’s name, what have you gone and done?’ ‘I’ve sent a villain to hell,’

he answers, 'let him come back if he can.' Some of the chaps laughed at this. They had trimmed the fo'k'sle lamp afresh, and all hands seemed wide awake, as no doubt they would be after the row of the pig and the danger we scraped clear of ; but I tell ye, Captain Broadwater," he continued, with another look up the ladder, "that there was a sound in them men's laughter which gave me to know that a cask of gunpowder, with the head knocked off lying clear for the first spark, wouldn't be a bigger danger in the hold of this vessel than's her fo'k'sle to her as it now stands, sir." He paused, dried his face on a great blue handkerchief, and then went on speaking hurriedly. "I says, 'Charles, you must come out of that! No use skulking below. There's no stabbing men in this here craft and lying snug after it. Up with ye now,—don't give me the trouble to fetch ye.' He bawled out a curse, keeping hidden all the time. I put my leg over, but ere I could lift the other, four or five men sprang under the hatch, and one of them said, 'See here, Mr. Gordon. We don't owe you no grudge. These are your quarters as they are ourn ; but

the man's not to be touched. Understand that ! By the Eternal ! if so be a finger's laid upon him the capt'n 'll answer for it with his life ; so aft with ye, sir, and give him this piece of news from his fo'k'sle.' I got out of the hatch, and after a look down at the men, came away to tell ye what's happened."

I had made up my mind to offer no suggestions, and so contented myself with watching Broadwater, wondering what measures such a head as his would be able to devise for the remedying of the horrible mess into which he and his mate had plunged us. He seemed to wake up when the boatswain ceased, and fell to pacing the cabin in silence, measuring twenty or thirty strides before he spoke. He then said, "Better return on deck, Mr. Gordon, and look after the brig, sir. Send Billy here." The boatswain ascended the ladder ; Broadwater resumed his walk.

One wants a paint-brush instead of a quill for such a picture as this. The dead body of the mate ; Miss Grant motionless and composed, though, methought, there was a flash of an almost preternatural vitality in the dark sweep

of her eyes whenever they met mine ; the short, square, muscular figure of Broadwater pacing the length of the cabin, staring ahead of him with the blind, wooden look of a figure-head ; the play of shadows set dancing by the lamp ; the midnight silence on deck ; the soft, washing sound of water running in some sobbing black fold along the bends ; the creak and jar of the fabric as she rolled on the light swell, with many a muffled note like the short laughs or sullen grumblings of a company of giants below, stealing to our ear from the freighted hold beneath our feet—I say there is nothing in ink to give you the colour, the horror, the strangeness of this cabin picture, and the noises breaking into the interval of silence, during which the captain stepped from one end to the other, whilst Miss Grant and I waited for the arrival of the boy, knowing what he was wanted for.

A few moments before he came, Broadwater halted at the side of the dead man, stooped and listened, grasped his wrist and held it, as though feeling for the life there, then shot erect, and cried out, “ Never before did such a thing happen aboard of me ! never before ! And they

talk of murdering me too, hey? How many lives must it cost 'em? How many lives must it cost 'em?" He thrust his hand into the bosom of his shirt, and made as if to run to his cabin, but checked himself, wheeled round, and fell to pacing the deck afresh.

The boy arrived. "Here," shouted Broadwater fiercely, "help me to carry that body to his berth."

The unhappy youth stood with his knock-knees trembling one against the other, whilst he stared at the corpse with eyes which threatened to leap from their sockets. If ever human hair stirred upon the head to the agitation of the spirit, his did. But his fear of Broadwater was livelier than his dread of the corpse. Between them they carried the body to its berth in the fore-end, and I had not known how heavily the presence of the thing had hung upon me until it was gone, when I fetched a breath as easy as a sigh.

Broadwater returned, and the boy shambling in his wake went stealthily to the ladder, and then fled up it as though the mate were in pursuit of him. The captain looked through the

hatch as if he meant to mount on deck, but hung irresolute, with a short glance round to me that was like a question. I own that the difficulty with which he was confronted was enough to stagger a brighter intellect than his pork-fed and rum-tinctured brains. Yet his hesitation at such a juncture was mighty discomposing too. Observing that he continued to stand in a posture of doubt at the foot of the ladder, I said bluntly, believing that a plain question might help him, "Captain, what do you mean to do?"

He looked at me oddly for some moments, sent a glance into the black arch of atmosphere formed by the cover of the companion-way, and answered in a deep, sea-growling note, "Cursed if I know. What would *you* do?"

"Wait till daylight, anyhow," I replied; "remain cool, and keep my temper. That's what *I* should resolve upon first. For the rest I should be guided by events."

"And who says I ain't cool?" he cried in a quarrelsome way, "and as to losing my temper——" he stopped dead to the sudden choke of rage in his throat, clenched both fists till

I noticed the veins stand out black to the tension like whipcord under the flesh, lifted his arms to the deck overhead, and shook them convulsively in a fit of speechless passion ; then looking for his cap he pulled it fiercely down to his ears, and went with a heavy tread up the steps.

“We ought to be grateful,” said I, “that the fellow’s rage is often too great to enable him to speak. His speechlessness was the very petrification of his curses !”

“He is not the man,” she exclaimed, “for such an emergency as this. Pray God there may be some good sense left amongst the crew. If not, what will happen ?”

“I comfort myself with the thought,” I replied, “that sailors are slow to mutiny. They know the law. If they refuse their duty, certain and severe punishment awaits them ashore ; if they seize the vessel, it is piracy—a criminal act that ends with Jack Ketch. If they murder—but enough of such talk, Miss Grant. Here has been a wild disturbance that may presently settle down into a sulky calm ; and let the tranquillity be as sinister as it will, providing

we can step ashore at Rio before it ends, we shall have reason to be satisfied."

She glanced at the dark stain on the deck, a slight shiver ran through her, and she folded her arms across her breast as though for the warmth of them.

"What a night this has been!" she cried; "indeed, what a time the whole voyage has been, so far as it has gone! I have heard stories of wild doings in vessels of this kind trading to the West Indies and to South America, but nothing to equal our experiences!"

She shivered again; I caught a tremble in her under-lip, and a swift expression of mingled worry and horror in her eyes, and fearing that she would break down—and surely what she had seen and suffered since she had quitted her berth might well have broken a hardier spirit than ever woman was yet informed with—I poured a little brandy into a glass, and begged her to drink it; but she waved it aside with a sudden proud smile, sweet with kindness too.

"Do not misjudge me, Mr. Musgrave," she said; "if I seem to falter in a time of trouble, it is not, I think, from want of courage. It is the

sense of uncertainty that always weakens me most—the not knowing what to do.” She suddenly ceased, lifting her hand to motion silence; but the noise was no more than the growling of old Broadwater’s voice talking to the boatswain close against the cabin skylight, one frame of which stood open. We strained our ears, but could not catch words enough to enable us to gather the import of their talk. I advised her to return to her berth, and sleep out the rest of the night if she could. She smiled at my speaking of sleep, and said she would go to her berth and dress herself.

“But you will not come on deck, Miss Grant?”

“Why not?”

“Be advised by me, I beg you. It is bleak and black; what can you do on deck? Next, in the present temper of the men, I could wish you to keep out of sight of them. The dawn will soon be at hand, and sunrise may give a new complexion to our affairs.”

“I will do whatever you please,” she said “I merely need advice. What follows I hope I shall have courage enough to meet,” and with another smile—so full of spirit that it was

almost enough to make one doubt that she fully grasped the significance of our dangerous situation, in a small brig with murder newly done, and the crew sheltering and making a hero of the assassin—she entered her berth. Ten minutes after, I quitted my own cabin, fully dressed, and went on deck.

CHAPTER XII.

MUTINY.

As I stepped over the combing of the hatch, I caught sight of the dawn sifting out into dim ash along the seaboard on the port, or, as we then termed it, the larboard side. It was a cold, unearthly light, and against it the sea-line ran in a short clear ruling, black as liquid pitch. The wind was a quiet breeze, as it had been throughout the night ; but the swell had veered from abeam to the starboard quarter, and swung the brig onwards in gliding, floating movements, though that her sails were doing their work you knew by the sound of the singing of running waters rising from the obscurity, mingled with a dull noise of moaning, and the flat, echoless plashing of ripple colliding with ripple into

short spouts of sea, which leaped without life round about the vessel's quarters.

Even as the dawn broke it was yet so dark that there was nothing to be seen but the filtering light ; but this brightened fast into a ragged sort of staring of the radiance over streaks and through tail-ends of clouds, until the whole circumference of the horizon sloped dark to the vague gray of the sky, with a slow writhing, wonderful to behold, of the shadowy substance of the brig's sails, masts, and hull, into determinable forms, out of what was just now mere impalpable blocks of dusk one on top of another.

I can conceive of no spectacle more melancholy and cheerless than the first breaking of day over the wide and troubled ocean. There is a bleakness in the aspect of pallid heaven and yet darkling water, and in the gray complexion of the canvas and rigging of the ship, that enters the atmosphere as a sensible quality of cold ; and I have known men who, though they had been on deck for several hours without feeling the edge of the wind, have slapped their breasts with a shudder to the first opening of

the desolate faintness in the east. But it was soon broad daylight. The broken, blind sort of stare among the clouds to larboard melted out into the flooding of effulgent pink—the sun lifted a segment of rose-red glory—a sinuous stream of radiance flashed from one blue brow to another down to within a musket-shot of us—and then you saw a piebald sky, mottled into rich marble with dashes of white vapour—a broad-bosomed swell rolling in folds of dark blue and brimming to our channels, freckled with foaming wrinkles.

There were some men talking near the fore-hatch ; occasionally they directed their glances aft to the quarter-deck, where the captain and boatswain stood in silent waiting, as it seemed to me, until the spring of the sun from the ocean should fairly settle the dawn into day. I took a long survey of the blue circle, but there was nothing to be seen. Not that there was anything to be hoped from the sight of a ship, unless, indeed, she should prove a man-of-war ; for our trouble was not of a kind that a merchantman could meddle with. How could her people serve us ? Advice was hardly likely

to prove profitable to Broadwater, and more than that he was not going to obtain by backing his topsail to speak a stranger and asking him to send a boat. And yet even the remotest gleam of a ship would have yielded me a sort of feeling of relief, by qualifying, however worthlessly, the profound sense of loneliness that possessed me on first seeing the vast stretch of liquid waste bathed in the delicate light of the sunrise.

There was an air of surly and defiant stubbornness in the postures and glances of the group forward that was instantly noticeable. I counted seven of them, and supposed therefore that amongst them was one or more of that division of the crew which had the watch below. They appeared to be holding a council; and it was startling, I can tell you, to mark their forms, so to speak, come out from the blackness into the dawn, and to think of them as having been there talking one to another, as they now were when the darkness hid them.

I looked for the man Charles, but he was not on deck. No doubt it was the fancies put into my head by the thought of the dead creature

below, which helped my imagination to colour and accentuate the attitudes and expressions of the fellows; but even though the night had passed as tranquilly as the preceding one, I must still, though bending the most incurious eye in the world upon them, have found something in their varied demeanour to render me uneasy. There was doggedness and obstinacy in the plant of the figures swaying upon their legs to the heave of the deck; in the arms squared firmly upon the breast, the rugged wrist of one hand showing out past the dark half-concealed knuckles of the other; in the challenging glances aft; in the well-conveyed indifference to the presence of the master.

The second mate had a very worn and haggard look. He showed like a man worried to the heart; but I think it must have been the shock of Bothwell's murder that paled and lengthened his face, for he had used the sea for too many years, and had lived too closely with sailors, to be scared to the degree that his visage and manner now indicated by mere mutinous mutterings and loafing, insolent attitudes. As to old Broadwater, it was quite impossible for

him to look gaunt ; his purple countenance was as much a part of him as his ears or his feet, and he would die with it on him as a negro dies with a black skin. But the incidents of the night had done their work with him nevertheless. The arch over each eye was sharper ; in quiet times this would have made him appear as though labouring under astonishment, but there were other features and other expressions to lift this aspect of surprise into a look of savage consternation. Had I viewed him without knowing what was the matter, I should have imagined that he had been on deck day and night for a week, exposed to violent and dangerous weather, during which his mind had been heavily strained by anxiety.

There was a man named Daniel Ladova, another half-blood, as I supposed, standing at the wheel, and I could have laughed outright at the pat fit of the fellow's face to the circumstances of the time ; for though I dare say he may have been at bottom as steady, respectable, and sober a creature as one could wish to see in a ship's fore-castle, yet he was so confoundedly ugly, with his flat nose, the nostrils whereof

were stretched past the line of his eyes, his wide mouth and negro fulness of lips, his coal-black, long, streaky Indian hair, low forehead and complexion of saffron, the whole topped off by the sieve-like pitting of smallpox, that one might have searched every shipping-yard in Great Britain without meeting with a fellow better qualified by his looks to stand at the brig's helm in this particular juncture.

Suddenly Broadwater made some observation to Gordon, and walked aft. The boatswain called out, "Forward there! Send Charles aft, one of you!" but there was a half-heartedness in his way of singing out that made one feel he regarded the captain's command as purposeless and ridiculous.

The fellows lounging about the foremast looked round to the hail, but only quitted their posture to that extent. No one called to Charles, no one even approached the scuttle to do so.

"D'ye hear what I say, men?" repeated Gordon, but in the same half-spirited tone, as though the bother of this time had taken most

of the manhood out of him ; “ one of you tell Charles that the captain wants him aft.”

“ Charles has got nothen to do with us,” cried back one of the fellows huskily ; “ if the capt’n wants him, he knows where to find him.”

Broadwater bawled from the station he occupied near the wheel, “ What are they a-saying, Mr. Gordon ? What are they a-saying, sir ? ”

The boatswain replied, “ If we want the half-blood, we must call him ourselves.”

“ Send all hands aft ! send all hands aft ! ” shouted Broadwater furiously, stepping forward by half-a-dozen angry strides, and then halting, with his chest rising and falling to his passionate breathing, that was not all pure wrath either, for I could *feel* the irresolution that lay under all this show of temper, and guessed that but very little likely to prove useful to us could follow on any intentions he might have in his mind.

The boatswain instantly roared out, “ Lay aft all hands ! ” in much such a hurricane note as he would have delivered in a gale of wind, in summoning all hands to reef topsails.

My heart beat fast now, I confess, for the

men's refusal to obey this order would signify mutiny ; and though from the first hour of my climbing aboard the Iron Crown I had been apprehensive of grievous trouble in this way, now that it had come to look as if the thing was about to happen, I was as much agitated as though I had never given it a thought, and it had broken upon us on a sudden. Judge, then, of my relief, when I saw the knot of men gathered about the foremast leisurely make their way aft with a shambling, devil-may-care gait for the most part ; one or two with a half grin, which was less suited to my taste than the mulish, sullen countenances the others carried. The captain, leaning forwards and backwards on his curved legs to the swing of the ship, his arms up and down, his hands clenched to the appearance of small rounds of beef, his cap jammed so tightly down upon his head that the upper rounds of his ears forked out with the pressure, stood fixedly regarding the sailors as they approached. Meanwhile the boatswain had gone forward, and picking up a handspike, thumped the deck heavily with it, whilst with his head overhanging the scuttle—by which I

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would have you understand the little fore-castle-hatch through which the men emerged from, or dropped into their quarters—he delivered a second leather-lunged roar of “All hands lay aft!” emphasizing his cry with a further smiting of the deck with his bar, which he then threw down. This done, he came away, and stood a little abaft the main-rigging, the captain having posted himself abreast of the companion-hatch. In a few moments the rest of the men who were in the fore-castle tumbled up, hoisting themselves out with their elbows, and vaulting lightly on to the deck, with a sailor’s enjoyment of an incident that at least gave them something else to think of than the cheerless, laborious routine of the ship’s work.

The sun was now risen, and some degrees above the horizon. It was half-past four in the morning, maybe later ; one takes no particular account of time in such passages as these. The warm breeze blew steadily, and the brig buzzed softly over the blue hills of swell, which, as they ran into the south-east quarter, lifted the molten silver of the sun’s reflection upon their broad shoulders in regular procession, till the white

dazzle there was as blinding as a glance at the luminary himself. I had often read of difficulties of this kind happening at sea, but never been brought face to face with the reality ; and I remember thinking, as I stood on the larboard side of the vessel, close against the quarter-boat, and ran my eye over the group that had come to a stand a little abaft the mainmast, that though the perils of the deep be many, some frightful, and all of them formidable, the worst of them, ay, even fire itself, must yield in horror to mutiny—where men arm themselves against their fellows, where the passions of undisciplined minds are let loose, where tyrannic authority and bitter grievance come in conflict, and where the struggle is inflamed and rendered wilder than anything of a like sort could ever become ashore through the forecastle perception that, the bad business once entered upon, there is no mercy to be expected in the event of failure, no hope to be cherished should rebellion prove successful. In disaster men work together for their lives ; in mutiny they work together for their own destruction. The sweep of the sparkling sea-line round about us

was like the compression of the very spirit of loneliness into our little brig. There was nothing to help the eye, to ease, by a solitary detail of discipline, the perturbation excited by the scene. On board an Indiaman, for instance, there would have been mates and midshipmen in plenty, loyal to the commander; with an array of passengers, maybe, in whose fidelity one could count in the name of self-concern. It would be strange, too, if the whole of a big ship's company should prove disaffected; so that the quarter-deck might reckon at least on the negative services of a portion of the crew. But if yonder crowd, gathered about the main-mast, and staring with mingled derision and hate at the square, round-legged, red-faced man whose lifted brows and whistling mouth put the expression of a gape into his countenance, broke into revolt, what should our case prove? I counted ten of them, and the man who steered would make eleven, and Charles, who skulked below, twelve. Twelve reckless fellows, with the scent of the assassin's knife fresh in their nostrils, with instincts and yearnings perhaps made devilish by the memory of a

usage of which I as a passenger must needs have seen but a very little part, though I had witnessed enough to convince me that had I been of their company, and suffered as they had, my resentment would surely not have left me among the hindmost of them in the posture they now exhibited!

The picture was as nautical as the most ardent lover of ocean-pieces could desire. The men were variously attired: in blue dungaree—in patched canvas breeches—in half-boots, and coloured shirts which revealed their brawny breasts bare to the dark moss upon them—here a round hat, there a sou'-wester, and around every sailor's waist was the narrow sea-belt, with a sheath of leather upon the hip, holding, convenient to the grasp, the black haft of a dagger-shaped knife. The shadows of the rigging crawled upon them, as the vessel, with a little humming of water at her bow, floated, with cradling swings, from one sapphire knoll to another; not a feature but had the true oceanic colour: the coils of rigging swinging at the belaying-pins; the big scuttle-butt securely seized under the high bulwark; the little white

caboose with its head of black chimney whence blew a vein of blue smoke ; the yellow long-boat amid ships snugged under the spare booms, with a black snout projecting from the sty under it ; and a darting and withdrawal beyond of the heads of cocks and hens glancing like red rags as they showed and vanished through the bars of the coops. Aloft, swelling gently, rose courses and topsails to the little royals, with a breezy stir of shadows in the hollows, and a pearly curve sunwards where the bosom, arching beyond the bolt-rope, caught the full splendour shining out of the east.

Broadwater pulled off his hat, dried his forehead, covered himself afresh, and approached the men by half-a-dozen paces.

“Is the man Charles among ye?” said he ; “if so, let him step out, for it’s *him* I want, not *you*.”

Of course he knew perfectly well that the half-blood did not form one of that little crowd. Perhaps he meant to convey that he had not deigned to glance at the fellows ; but this was absurd, for every man as he stepped aft must have observed that the captain watched him as

a terrier does an approaching rat. One or two of them glanced over their shoulders, as though believing that the half-blood had come from the fore-castle. No answer was returned to Broad-water's inquiry.

"Now, look here, men," he continued, with an air of bluster which I hoped would not increase upon him, "you know, of course, that Charles committed murder this morning by stabbing the mate, who lies a dead body in his bunk below; and you likewise know that for an act of this kind, when he gets ashore, he'll be hung up by the neck, and left to dangle there till his bones blow away. Now, as he's a murderer, it's my duty to put him in irons, and keep him under hatches till I'm able to hand him over to the people employed by the law to sentence and strangle him, and all such folks as he. D'ye see, men?" with a powerful flourish of his arm, and a slight increase of bluster, as though he was gaining in spirit from the air of attention with which the sailors seemed to listen to him. "We don't want no difficulties. Aboard *me* everything has always been plain sailing, and up to the knocker. My mate lies

a dead man, and I want the chap as killed him."

He paused, running his eye over them. Two or three of the crew gave their heads a quick shake, but none of them spoke.

"The man," proceeded Broadwater, "is lying snuggled away in the fo'k'sle. Now, look ye here, my lads. There need be no trouble about it at all. All that you've got to do is just to remain where you are, whilst me and the second mate fetches him—seeing that he won't come under milder persuasions."

I thought by the manner of the men that they hung in the wind, and would let the captain have his way. He must have fancied this also, for he started to walk to the fore-castle with a gesture of his hand to the boatswain; but, ere he could get one leg fair before the other, a tall, powerfully-built seaman flung himself with a stride or two upon the line of deck which the captain was about to measure, and cried out, "Stop, sir! no furdur! We don't mean to let you have the man."

If Broadwater had been shot through the heart, the arrest of his movements could not

have been more spasmodic and utter. Rage once again rendered him speechless, and the rush of blood to his head darkened his purple countenance into an almost livid complexion. Half-a-dozen sailors thrust up and formed about the man who had spoken. Their looks were so threatening, that I dreaded in Broadwater the least gesture that might be mistaken as combative by the fellows. The boatswain came to the side of the old man, who, gasping for breath, and as voiceless as a person in a fit, fell back step by step till he had put some half-dozen yards between him and the crew, by which time he had recovered his voice ; but I protest, had I not looked at him and observed his lips to move, that I should not have known him by his tones. He raised his arm, and shook his clenched fist at the tall sailor.

“Your name’s Terence Mole,” he said. “If it should cost me every shilling I’m worth so to punish ye for this ere job as to keep ye cursing your mother’s memory day and night for ever having bore you, I’ll spend it! If, to have ye punished for this, it should oblige me to tear the shirt off my back and pawn it for more law

yet to crush you with, I'd do it, and go naked for the rest of my time, and die easy! You scoundrel!"

He fell speechless again, with another mad brandishing of his arms towards the tall sailor. The man watched him with a cold, insolent grin. One of the crew exclaimed, "Soft words, master, soft words. Ye want that there man Charles, and we don't mean to let ye have him."

The boatswain, with a glance at the captain, turned upon the crew. "Lads," he exclaimed, "consider what you're a-doing of! In protecting this here murderer you're making yourselves parties to his crime; and though I don't know much about shore-going law, I can't question that your abetting of the villain may end in stringing most of ye up alongside of him; whilst it should sinnify transportation for life to the rest of ye."

"Mr. Gordon," answered the tall seaman Mole, "we've tarned the matter over, and we've made up our minds not to let the man Charles suffer, leastways aboard this brig, for his act. He's rid us of a devil," he pronounced

the word with a sudden snap of the teeth, "and if he hadn't done it some one else would; though it was for him, by rights, to make a beginning, seeing how he was sarved," he pointed with a dark thumb in the direction of the foremast, "merely for commiserating the fate of a drowned shipmate. If the capt'n's flesh an' blood, so are we. We're willing enough to listen to reason, but so long as we continue to be the crew of this here brig, Charles don't go into irons; nor shall we allow him to be punished in any other way."

With that he folded his arms, rearing his figure erect, and angrily staring at the captain. The boatswain turned to Broadwater as much as to say, "Speak, sir, speak. You hear what the man says." The old fellow swung on his heel and walked aft, and stood with his hands behind him gazing seawards. The men fell to talking among themselves, and there was a laugh or two, but the hilarity had a very false ring, and was instantly checked by a growling "Dowse it, you fool, dowse it!" I observed some of the seamen regarding me, but I pretty well understood that by this time they knew

that whatever might be my sympathies they assuredly did not incline towards the cabin end of the ship. Besides, I had a right to listen and look on at all events, and leaning against the rail, with my hands in my pockets, I kept my eyes fixed on them, unmoved by their gaze.

Although Broadwater scarcely remained a minute abaft the wheel, the time seemed so long that I believed that he intended the men should break up and go forward of their own accord, without giving himself the trouble of dismissing them. But I was mistaken. He suddenly wheeled round and came along at a rapid pace, abruptly stopping however at some distance from the crew.

“It’s your intention, then,” he shouted, “not to allow me to clap this murderer in irons and lock him up?”

“You heard what was said,” one of them exclaimed.

“Mr. Gordon!” he suddenly roared, “forwards with us both! By the thunder of heaven, we’ll have a try for the bloody villain, let follow what will!”

I saw him tweak at the band of his trousers with the motion of a man who girds himself for an affray, then make a spring. The men closed in a wall before him. He struck at them, but I could not see that his blows were returned ; they did no more than to press upon him and drive him backwards. Gordon threw his arms around the old fellow's waist to drag him away. Sickened and horrified by the scene, I ran to assist the boatswain, dreading lest one of the many blows which the old fellow was raining might lead to a general onslaught on him, and grasped his right arm, and in a few moments we had hauled him clear of the crew, at whom the boatswain continued shouting, as together we pulled the skipper aft, "For God's sake, go forward, men ! for God's sake, go forward !"

CHAPTER XIII.

BROADWATER PROVES OBSTINATE.

WE got Broadwater, wheezing, panting, and gasping, to the cabin skylight, upon which we forced him to sit, not a little blown ourselves by our uncommon exertions ; by which time the crew had broken up as advised by the boatswain, and were going forward in twos and threes quietly enough. Broadwater sat for some minutes without offering to speak ; when he had got his breath again, he flung off the skylight and ran below with the swiftness and gestures of a madman.

“ This is a bad business—a bad business, sir,” said Gordon, speaking in a voice full of concern.

“ The deuce of it is,” I exclaimed, “ the captain has not the least idea how to act. The men are wildly to blame—no doubt of that ; it

is monstrous that British seamen should sympathize with a murderer and a foreigner ; but I am certain, from signs of a disposition I took notice of in them as they stood together yonder, that were the master of this vessel any other man than Broadwater, the sailors might easily be brought over."

" I know it, sir—I know it," he cried bitterly. " They began well. Had they been properly used they would have gone on and ended well. But though the man's dead I don't mind saying, Mr. Musgrave, that a crueller mate never walked a ship's deck than Mr. Bothwell. 'Twasn't only the words he'd use, 'twas the insulting tone of them—like coating with poison the knife you stab with. The brutal tarms cut to the men's hearts, and lay festering there, sir, with the recollection of the fellow's voice and looks. Ye onderstand me ? It rose above the half-blood's restraint. A horrid murder, Mr. Musgrave, but it don't surprise me."

" What will Broadwater do ? "

He threw a glance down the skylight and exclaimed, " I'm afraid whatever he does'll be wrong."

“ But what would you advise, Mr. Gordon ? There is a lady below, remember ; I am responsible for her safety ; if for her sake only, this trouble should be speedily ended by some decisive course of action.”

“ Why, sir, seeing how matters stand,” he answered—“ the mate dead, his murderer screened by the men, the crew in a state of mutiny, the captain ought to head fair for Madeira—’tis the nearest point, where no doubt he’d get help from the shore, if so be there was no English or foreign man-of-war riding there.”

“ Certainly,” I cried ; “ that should be his plan ! There is no man forward, I suppose, capable of guessing the captain’s intentions by a change of course ? ”

“ The change would be too small to take their notice,” he responded. “ But suppose they did guess what he was at, they’d make no difficulty about it—at least whilst their feelings remain as they are now. They hate the vessel, and ’ud be glad of a chance to get away from her, though the road to their liberty lay through a jail.”

“ Have you suggested this notion to the captain ? ”

"I told him," he answered, "when him and me were talking before sunrise about the mate's murder, that if the men continued to give trouble, or broke out into regular mutiny, there'd be certainly nothing for it but to head for Madeira."

"What did he say?"

"Cursed and swore, sir. 'Sooner than be driven to Madeira by my crew,' he says, 'I'd cut away the brig's masts, and let her lie where she is,' he says, 'till she's growed unrecognizable for barnacles!' But," he added, "now that he's seen the sort of attitude the men have put themselves into he may change his ideas and agree with me."

"Was there ever such a bigoted old fool?" I cried. "Did ever one hear of so rum-soddened a dolt placed in such a confoundedly responsible position as that of master of a ship before? I only wish he were as ignorant of navigation as he is of human nature and the art of treating sailors: I'd run him then myself to Madeira, and he shouldn't know where he was bound to until the island was hove up green over the bow. What is the stupid idiot to do if the hands, barring yourself, are against him?" I continued

talking hotly, out of the fit of nervous irritability that had seized me. "And what does he mean by saying that he would sooner cut away his masts than haul in for the island and the protection it would afford him? Confound the fellow! Does he suppose that the lady and I parted with our money for the privilege of shipping in a sheer hulk?"

"Well, sir," said Gordon, "I dessay if ye put it to him warmly he'll listen to ye. If not to you, to nobody else for sartain, sir. There's too much feeding mixed up with the brains in his head; and the machinery's got clogged and don't travel properly, spite of his being incessantly greasing of it with liquor. And what's he going to do about the watches, I wonder? Why, it must be drawing on for six o'clock, and here have I been on deck since midnight." He dodged about the skylight in his efforts to command a view of the cabin, to see if the captain were there. "There's ne'er a man more willing to do his bit than me," he said, "but it ain't in flesh and blood to keep all on watching and nothen else."

"If he likes to make you his chief mate, and

me his second," said I, "I shall be quite willing to fill the berth, and take watch and watch with you. I shouldn't set myself up as *your* match, Gordon, of course; but if I couldn't trim sail with old Broadwater, or take sights, or note a change of wind, or mark the head of a growing squall with him, he shall tell me I can't distinguish the difference between the sheet of his trysail and the hanks of his standing jib."

"Put it to him, sir; put it to him," cried the boatswain, rubbing his hands with a small emotion of glee in his worried face. "I tell you what, sir, if the capt'n 'ud make you hacting second mate—unbecoming as such a post would be for a gentleman like you to occupy—I allow that the appointment 'ud go further to reconcile the men to the brig, and to the voyage, than all the excuses the capt'n could make for himself, and all the wisest sort of kindness he'd be capable of showing 'em. Of course they know that you have been a sailor, sir."

"How?" I asked.

"Why," he replied, "I told them. Next, they're aware that the man Charles was saved from spending the night lashed to the foremast

by your and the lady's entreaties and threats to leave the ship. That bit of news was brought forrards by Billy the cabin-boy ; likewise by the chap whose trick it was at the wheel when the lady spoke to the capt'n about the half-blood. Depend upon it, sir," he added emphatically, "that if you should be made second mate, or, better still, chief mate, the men 'ud feel so satisfied to know they'd got a gentleman to officer them, that I'm confident they'd give no further trouble this side of Rio. Will you put it to the capt'n, sir ?"

"Certainly I will," I replied, struck by the poor fellow's eagerness, though my fancy hung much less in this direction than in a desire to urge Broadwater to make promptly for Madeira.

I left the honest creature and went below, pretty shrewdly guessing that Miss Grant lay all this while sleepless in her cabin, and was in bad need of the encouragement of a chat. I also wished to meet Broadwater, that I might tackle him whilst I was in the mood to pitch my key to any sort of note that he might choose to strike. Billy the cabin-boy, with his lank, yellow hair dangling over his eyes, was on his

knees working with a deck-scraper at the dark and ugly stain at the foot of the companion-steps ; but blood lies upon wood as upon the human conscience ; its sacred magic, its preternatural quality of staining, is no more to be neutralized in timber by the scraper, than in the murderer's mind by the parson. 'Twas a mallet and chisel that the lad needed, and even with them the cleansing of the plank might have ended in a hole in the deck, gaping to the uttermost outline of the horrid blot. I felt a little creeping in my skin as I passed the boy, but then I was desperately bothered, and the eyes of my imagination were out of gear, so that little things put on ugly forms, and through distortion of aspect were cruelly suggestive and abominably significant.

I listened a moment at Miss Grant's cabin-door, and very softly knocked, by no means desiring to disturb her should she be asleep. She instantly asked who it was that knocked ; I answered and she came out. She was fully dressed, robed in jacket and hat for the deck.

"I am glad you have come to me," she exclaimed ; "but you see I have dutifully obeyed

your orders. I would not even enter the cabin, though you would imagine how dull, expectant, miserable, I felt alone—listening, waiting, dreading I cannot tell you what—in this gloomy little box.”

I took her hand and conducted her to the cabin, and she seemed to lift her head like a drooping lily to the refreshment of water as she entered an atmosphere bright with the sparkling of the sun flowing full upon the skylight, and crawling in sheets of gold upon the bulkheads and deck. She looked with attention at the lad at work under the hatch, as though she wondered what he was doing; then, understanding, she partly turned her back upon him with a manner that was like dismissing the perception of the meaning of the fellow's labour from her memory.

“What have you got to tell me?” she asked, seating herself, and resting her chin in the palms of her hands, whilst she gazed at me from under the shadow of her broad straw hat with such a spirit of resolution in her eyes, that I saw she had prepared herself for the darkest disclosures.

I related exactly all that had happened during the time I had been on deck, and was in the midst of repeating my recent conversation with the boatswain when she slightly coughed, with a significant glance past me. I looked, and saw Broadwater coming from his cabin. He stood near the boy a moment or two watching him, then gave the lad a kick that threw him on to his face.

"Away with ye!" he cried. "Scraping indeed! It's bottle-washing that's in your line, you young scaramouch! Off with ye for a broom, and collect these here shavings, and tell the cook to get the cabin-breakfast ready by six bells."

The boy picked himself up, and mounted the ladder. Broadwater turning to me said, "An all-night job regularly sets me pining for food, long afore I should feel the need of it after a proper allowance of sleep." I thought to myself, Shall I begin with the fellow at once, or wait till he has broken his fast? A meal might make him more sensible, render him more tractable; but my present mood was an opportunity I ought not to miss; and then time was exceedingly precious. So I began:

“ Captain Broadwater, unless you are going on deck to relieve the boatswain, who has had charge since midnight——”

He interrupted me by saying in his roughest manner, “ Mr. Musgrave, the discipline of the Iron Crown’s my affair. Don’t, I beg of you, give yourself any trouble about it, sir.”

“ Then sit down,” said I, warmly and sternly, “ for if the discipline of the vessel is *your* affair, this lady’s safety is *mine* ! So now, sir, give me your attention, for you will find that I am more in earnest than even the most rebellious of your men forward.” He did not offer to sit, but contented himself with watching me. “ First,” I went on, “ what do you mean to do ?”

“ Wait, sir, and you’ll see.”

“ No,” I cried, bringing my hand down with a sounding whack upon my thigh ; “ that answer will not satisfy me, Captain Broadwater. The crew are in a state of mutiny ; your mate lies murdered ; the only living creature aboard that you can depend on is your bo’sun, and even *he* may fail you—honest to the bottom of his soul as I know him to be—for he is no more than a

foremast hand, though he holds a responsible position under you. Now listen, sir. As matters stand, this lady and I are in peril of our lives. Your duty is not only to give us every encouragement, but to make haste to obtain such assistance as shall deliver us, as well as yourself and vessel, from the heavy dangers which threaten us. Therefore I demand to know what you mean to do?"

He eyed me with the same kind of doggedness I had noticed in some of his men when he was addressing them; was silent for a space after I had ceased, and then said, "What was your object in hiring cabins in this brig?"

"The passage to Rio."

"Right! And I'm carrying you to Rio. That's the part you paid my owner for me to perform, and I'll *do* it."

"But," I cried, "how is it possible that you can carry your vessel to Rio with a crew who have already distinctly mutinied by refusing to surrender your mate's murderer to you?"

"The Lord spare me!" he roared out. "If I ain't bound to Rio where else am I a-going?"

"See here," said I, determined to make him

understand by my manner that I was in earnest, "you must be perfectly well aware that as matters are you will never succeed in carrying your ship to Rio. A moment, if you please! The crew have rebelled to a man, and have defied you. You know it! The respect you might have obtained you have forfeited, and they laugh at your commands. You know that too! By protecting the half-blood they share in his crime, and every fellow in your 'forecastle is therefore an assassin at heart. And you mean to tell me that, all this being as I say, you will be able to complete a voyage which may run us into two or three months, but which is as yet but a week old only?"

"Certainly!" he cried; "we're bound to Rio, and I mean to keep all on till we get there."

"If that be so," said I vehemently, "this lady and I decline to proceed with you."

"Decline to proceed!" he shouted, evidently misunderstanding me.

"Yes, sir," I answered, shouting too. "We insist upon your steering the brig for the island of Madeira. The place is within a few days' sail. I don't doubt that the crew would cheer-

fully help you to navigate the vessel there. They loathe the brig as much as they dislike you, and would exult in their release, even if it came to their going ashore in irons. Therefore, Captain Broadwater, as you are in no condition to continue the voyage to Rio, I must insist, by virtue of my rights as a passenger, and of the claim that this lady has upon my protection, that you shape your course without any further loss of time for Madeira."

He breathed hard, then raised his fist and brought it down with a mighty whack upon the table. His face was dark with passion, his little eyes reeled as they took me in from head to foot. "Sooner than do what you say," he muttered rather than spoke, "I'd scuttle the ship with these hands," lifting them both, "and send every man-jack of us aboard to the devil." He backed away, as though he meant to walk crab-fashion to the companion-ladder, and on a sudden shouted out, "You've been a-talking with the bo'sun, Mr. Musgrave."

"And what of that?" I responded, in a voice that gave him to know I had lungs enough to outshout him even if occasion should render

such a contest needful. "Am I to understand that you refuse to head the ship for Madeira, that Miss Grant and I may go ashore there, and escape the barbarous perils which your treatment of the crew is certain to plunge us into if you persist in continuing this voyage?"

"Yes," he roared, "you are to understand it! —you are to understand it a hundred times over! My instructions are to carry this ship to Rio, and sooner than deviate I'll scuttle her!" and flinging his fist at me, so to speak, with a loud snap of his fingers, he went with a heavy lurching tramp up the ladder, growling out fifty curses in an undertone that reminded me of a dog gnawing a bone, watched by another.

I looked at Miss Grant. "Of all pig-headed varlets! Where," cried I, "could have been my eyes, that I was unable to decipher the old lobster's true nature under his complicated purple skin when I first met him?"

"We are confronted with a difficulty, Mr. Musgrave," she said quietly, mechanically twisting a ring upon her finger, with thoughtful eyes fixed upon it, "and we must look at it

calmly, and be patient, and consider what is best to be done. First of all," she continued, "I am quite certain, from the man's manner, that you will never induce him to alter his course for Madeira. And then what follows? Perhaps now that the mate is dead the crew will cease to prove troublesome. Mr. Gordon is a quiet man, and the sailors appear to like him. Mr. Musgrave, I believe if this horrid old captain could only be induced by threats or persuasions to use his men kindly, the voyage might be safely continued."

But, unhappily, peace of mind was not to be obtained by contemplation of merely theoretic conditions, though I heartily admired her cool inspection of a difficulty that surely could not have held less terrors for her than for any other woman without her heart to oppose it. If Broadwater was to be terrified into changing his nature, then no doubt we might reckon upon a comfortable and pleasant passage. But the old swaggerer's qualities clung like limpets to his soul. He was not to be cleansed by any process I was master of, at all events. The only hope that I could find lay in Miss Grant's

suggestion that, the mate being dead, the sailors' grievances would be diminished to the extent of the bitter usage he had given them. But the scene on deck that morning had been too significant not to fill me with dark and melancholy misgivings, which were accentuated yet by the feeling that, let me talk as hotly as I would, and threaten as clamorously as I chose, I was practically powerless. I had felt this in the Channel, and I felt it more violently now that we were far out upon the surface of the broad Atlantic, at the disposal of a man whose resolutions there were no means of thwarting, so far as I was concerned, unless indeed I sided with the men, encouraged them to deprive him of the command of the brig, and sailed her myself back to England or to the nearest port, leaving the vindication of my behaviour to the story of cruelty and peril it would be in my power to relate—a romantic project indeed, and to be instantly dismissed!

CHAPTER XIV.

THE SAILOR'S LAST TOSS.

I REMAINED with Miss Grant in the cabin until breakfast was served. Our talk referred to nothing but our situation, as you will suppose. Before long I found my worry and anxiety yielding to the influence of her calm yet animated gaze and clear good sense. Indeed there is no kind of human encouragement that equals the feeling a woman can inspire. The moral help a man will get from the posture and language of a brave girl is so invigorating that it will give his heart a new spirit, though there be the pulse of a lion in its beat.

Whilst we conversed I heard Broadwater talking on deck, and it seemed to me as if he were delivering a harangue; but I gave it little heed, being heartily sick of him and the mutinous

disturbances raised by his base old tongue. There was a sound of scrubbing-brushes gritting along upon the deck overhead, with a noise of pumping and of water washing about in the scuppers—assurance, at all events, that the crew were doing the ship's work. This I bade Miss Grant take notice of, being now rendered almost hopeful by the fine cordial influence of her intelligent thoughts and by the inspiring power of her smiles, her sparkling regard, the music of her voice, the resolution of soul that held her beauty as composed as if she slumbered.

Punctually at six bells—seven o'clock—the cabin-boy arrived with the breakfast, and almost immediately afterwards Broadwater made his appearance. I had got my cue from Miss Grant, who had urged me not to question the man, and above all in conversing with him never to lose my temper; so that we had nearly finished the repast before a single word was uttered by any of the three of us. The captain gobbled as heartily as if all had been well with the ship. In truth, his jaws were so incessantly occupied that they gave him no chance to utter a syllable.

Then, having somewhat appeased his appetite, he called for another great cup of black tea, which he fell to stirring meditatively, with an occasional lift of his little eyes to mine.

"I hope, Mr. Musgrave," said he, forcing an odd note of rough jocosity into his deep sea-tones, "that you've sent that there Madeiry scheme of yours adrift. Why, ma'am," he continued, turning to Miss Grant, "if so be as I'm given to onderstand that Rio's your home—and Mr. Grant was a gentleman whose name is very well beknown to me, very well beknown to me indeed—if so be, I says, that Rio's your home, surely, ma'am, you must be in a hurry to get there, and wouldn't thank me for carrying out Mr. Musgrave's proposal to delay the voyage by calling at Madeiry."

"Certainly I am impatient to get to Rio, Captain Broadwater," she answered, with a half glance at me, following on the faintest possible blush rising to her cheeks, and quickly vanishing, as though it were the shadow of a rose lifted to her face and dropped again. "But then it is my impatience that wants me to make *sure* of getting there."

He drained his cup and cried, "Never doubt it, mum. Give me wind enough to blow us along, the rest'll be as easy as swallowing whilks."

This new manner of confidence in him made me say, "The behaviour of the crew, I hope, has improved since sunrise?"

"Mr. Musgrave," he exclaimed, rising, "I have to beg and pray of you, sir, that you'll allow the behaviour of the crew to be *my* business. Judging from the observations you let fall this morning, it's middling plain to me that all that you want is to feel sure that you and the lady'll arrive at Rio. Ontil, then, you've got good cause to be alarmed, you've got no right to tell me what my duty is, how I'm to treat my crew, and what port it's my business to head for!" saying which, he picked up his cap, and buttoning his coat around him, with a ludicrous expression of mingled dignity and self-complacency he went on deck.

A couple of minutes later, not a little to my surprise, Gordon came down the companion-steps and stood a moment at the bottom of them, looking shyly at the table, cap in hand.

He tweaked an imaginary lock of hair on his forehead at Miss Grant, and exclaimed, with a nervous laugh, "Rather a novelty for me, Mr. Musgravè, sir, to breakfast 'long with ladies and gents in the land o' knives and forks; but it's the capt'n's orders. He's made me chief mate, and I'm to live down here and take Mr. Bothwell's cabin—when he's out of it," with a look at the stain at his feet.

"We are glad to welcome you aft, Gordon, believe me!" I cried. "Take that seat. Here's the teapot—I don't think Broadwater has emptied it."

He sat down and fell to his breakfast, and I cannot express to you what a new element of cheerfulness came into the atmosphere of that rude old interior out of this sailor's plain, hearty, honest face and bearing. I was extremely anxious to get the news, for the captain had told me nothing, and asked him if anything fresh had happened on deck since I came below. He replied, subduing his voice, with a heave up of his eyes at the skylight, till nothing but the whites of them showed, that the captain had called the men aft and made them a speech,

in which he told them that, if they agreed to go on with their work quietly and give him no more trouble, he would not insist upon their surrendering the half-blood, though the fellow would have to come on deck and share in the general work as heretofore. Of course, on his arrival at Rio, he would report the matter, and leave the rest to the law. That was his duty. He further told the men that Gordon would take the place of Mr. Bothwell, and that he—that is to say, the captain—would stand watch and watch with him for the rest of the voyage, unless, amongst the crew, he should later on discover a man fit to take the duties of second mate, when, if the hands consented, he should be willing to bring him aft. Indeed Gordon told me that Broadwater talked so soberly to the sailors that they stared at him and at one another, as though they suspected some ugly scheme behind this sudden queer shift of face. However it ended in their expressing themselves satisfied ; and Gordon particularly noticed that when the watch were turned to wash down, they sprang to the work with the liveliness of people from whom a shadow and

a burden have been lifted, whilst the watch below, who went forward to get their breakfast, exhibited every symptom of surprise and gratification.

"But it's all along of your doing, sir," continued the boatswain, still speaking in a voice scarcely raised above a whisper; "it was that there demand of yours that he should carry the ship to Madeiry that worked on the captain. He came up to me in a passion, and asked me what I meant by speaking of Madeiry to you; but cooled down astonishingly rapid, and, after taking a few turns by himself, sung out to me to send the men aft, with the consequence as I've related. A leery old gentleman, sir, but what's happened is bound to be well, providing it ends well."

This sudden change in the captain—though, like a shift of wind, it might mean only a short blow from a new quarter, and then a sweep back into a long howling gale out of the same old wild point—was a thing to feel grateful for, when the afternoon came and brought with it an hour's dead calm—a long wash of muddy swell heaving from the south-east, and running

a sluggish jumble of folds, round-browed as domes, with never a ridge in twenty miles of them to break the monotony of the hump-backed procession with the sparkling of a glass-clear head—and then a swift rush of breeze that swept the foam out of the water as it broke with a long cry out of the south-east dinginess, and bowed the brig down to her covering-board. Broadwater was ready for it. The topgallant-sails had been furled, the mainsail snugged to its yard, some fore-and-aft canvas (no need to be too particular) hauled down, and the topsails were blowing out from the yards on the caps with the reef-tackles hauled out, and hands dancing aloft to knot the points, when the first of the weather rang between our masts. It was not a moment when one wanted to think there was a mutiny aboard. Broadwater helped the man at the wheel to put the helm hard-a-weather, and to the long wash of the Atlantic swell foaming to the sudden scourging of the wind, with the sail swelling from the foretop-sail-yard, the foresail yearning high as though it would fly into the rush of shadows overhead, hands chorusing upon the main, with Gordon's

figure at the weather yard-arm coming out clean as a pencil-drawing against the soft dark race past him, the half-blood Charles swinging upon the flemish horse at his feet, the other fellows ranged along with many a kick-up abaft of the foot-ropes as they plunged to the reef-points curving out of reach as the line of the band arched to the slings and quarters—the brig, responding to her helm and to the heavy leeward drag of her big thunderous jib, gave her quarter to the tempestuous outfly, and went with long seething rolls through it like a sleigh over falls and risings of snow.

It was blowing so hard presently that they found the reefed fore-course and topsails with a stay-foresail and a fragment of trysail as much as the vessel could carry ; and before long there was a plentiful washing of water forward, for she lay now as close to her course as she would come, and the ridged seas foaming on top of the backs of the swell brimmed with a roar to the bow under the larboard cathead, where they rose in a dazzle of white water, then tumbling inboard with the clatter of twenty tons of shingle, and floating coils of the running rigging

up amongst the legs of the men, and converting locomotion in the waist into sheer floundering. The men worked briskly and with a will; indeed I accepted this burst of weather as a stroke of Providence, designed to rally the minds of the crew to their strict business of seafaring, and to bring old Broadwater to recognition of the value of willing sailors in the navigation of a ship—considerations which appeared to have fallen asleep in the tender breezes that had fanned us out of the Bay, under clear skies by day and sparkling constellations by night, down to the latitude and longitude our keel was now traversing. Certain it was this half gale—for it came to that—was dead in the road of Madeira; indeed the brig could not have looked up for the island to within six points; and methought as I stood near Broadwater, whilst the crew were on the foretopsail-yard, that he turned his eyes from the foaming windward seaboard to me, as if he would say, “You see what chance your Madeiry scheme would have *now*.”

This was really the first bit of hard weather we had yet encountered. The brig proved a wetter craft than I should have imagined, though

she rose buoyant to each long frothing hill of brine, with a slant of her spars and a shear of her cut-water that made you think she had more of the clipper instincts in her than the mind of her builder had included in his model. But it was dreary, weary work—the air on deck wet with spray and surging down upon you in volumes that often forced you to turn your back upon it to fetch a breath, a melancholy clattering of spare booms forward, the scream and smoke of water hissing inboards through the scupper-holes, and then draining away through the same apertures in long lamentable sobbings, the shrill whistling of the gale splitting upon the curve of the gray ropes, the quick roar of it as it flung as with a sound of cannon from under the foot of the arched canvas to the weather roll of the masts ; whilst below it was dismaller yet, bulkheads creaking, cabin-doors ticking like gigantic clocks upon their hooks and hinges to the regular swaying, groanings of strained cargo in the hold, and such a tumblefication of deck, that having once fairly brought up on a locker you loathed the obligation of leaving it.

The storm-shrouded day howled itself steadfastly onwards into the blackness of night, when the scene of commotion took a new character of wildness from the swarmings of sea-fire in the curl of each dark summit, and in the soft sheet-lightning-like flashes of the phosphor flying with the water through our rigging. But though it was a time of discomfort, it was a time of comparative ease, too, for it blew all thoughts of mutiny out of one's head. Recollections of tragedy, anxiety, and distress seemed to have been washed overboard by the first sea the brig shipped; and Miss Grant said to me that she would be glad never to see a sunlit day nor a placid night of moonshine again during the rest of the voyage, providing the Iron Crown continued to stem fairly onwards for Rio, and the men remained quiet, and Broadwater too occupied by the weather to bluster and bully as of old.

I confess I had forgotten all about the dead mate, when on returning from a short look round on deck at about half-past ten—Miss Grant having withdrawn to her berth an hour before—I saw Gordon and the cabin-boy stag-

gering out of one of the foremost cabins, bearing between them a long white bundle. I asked the boatswain what it was, and he answered, "The body of the mate, sir." The thing, bolster-shape, was stitched up in sail-cloth, and more ghastly, maybe, to the imagination for lacking suggestion of human outline.

"What are you going to do with it?" I asked.

"Heave it overboard, sir," answered Gordon.

I might have suspected as much ; yet I could not make sure that Broadwater would have dismissed the remains of his factotum without a benediction.

"The capt'n wouldn't trust the handling of him to any of the people forward," said Gordon, "nor bury him by daylight under their noses. I reckon he's right. This here," said he, with a look at the burden, at one end of which he swayed whilst the cabin-boy staggered at the other, but without the pale consternation in his face that would have shown in it had the captain been his assistant, "is still as a red rag to more than one pair of horns which have sprouted

aboard us of late days. Steady, my lad! Slew round now! I'll go back'ards up the steps, and don't you pull!"

The brig rolled so heavily that I expected every moment to see the boatswain plump down with his ghastly burthen and upset the boy. They managed to get it on deck however without mishap, and following, I watched them from over the edge of the companion-hatch swing the white thing with a low growling *one, two, THREE!* from Gordon, and send it with a flash like any one of the sheets of milk-white foam bursting over the weather-rail into the dark waters beyond. The sailor's last toss! I thought, as I re-entered the cabin; and whose child had been that negro-headed, handsome-featured fellow? The wolfish yell of the wind high aloft swept to the black orifice of the hatchway as an answer to the question, and no icy blast could have struck such a shudder through me as the chill that trembled from my hair to my feet to the sudden lighting of my eyes upon the mahogany-like stain upon the cabin-deck. One thing on top of another, 'twas almost enough to make a man feel sorry for the mur-

dered wretch. If ever a creature was charged to the gorge with all qualities which go to the making of a romantic scoundrel, this same Neil Bothwell had been. Maybe he was born a little too late ; for the paddle-wheel, if not the propeller, was even now scooping up all idealism out of the sea. If the black flag were not actually hauled down, it was on its way to the locker, there to moulder ; the Corsair had buried his Medora, and gone to the Isles of Greece to slink out, oily and filthy, upon the sleepy Turk, or the humming Sicilian. The slaver alone was active. Yet I never can recall Mr. Bothwell's woolly head, his chiselled features, white teeth, and nimble, sparkling eyes, along with the dark brutality of his nature, his piratical voice and venomous language, without feeling persuaded that the knife of the half-blood had cut short a career which, in its continuance, despite the crimson cross and the grinning teeth of the British frigate, must have supplied the naval writer with many fruitful and astonishing themes.

That miserable stain made the atmosphere of the cabin feel as bleak as a vault on a

December night ; and though we were supposed to be in warm parallels, I could not have snuggled me in my blankets with heartier relish of the clinging comfort of them had the gale been splitting upon frozen rigging, and the blackness upon the sea dashed with the iceberg's spectral tinge of faintness.

This dirty weather troubled us for four days. It seemed to have blown the ocean clear of ships and birds, for we sighted nothing, whether winged with canvas or feathers. All day long 'twas the same steadfast rush of the surge, green as bottle-glass, freckled with the foam flying from the champing courser in advance, lifting a head of melting white to the sullen slate of the shadow overlaying the sky ; with once—it was on the second evening—a fierce sunset of smoking crimson, red spokes of a dingy brightness cleaving the black scud and the boiling, angry haze of the west, and touching the unmirroring welter into spaces of a rusty blood-like colour, as though—and the fancy was Miss Grant's—each beam of coarse effulgence were a material weapon darted by some mighty hand on high, and making the

ocean bleed to the thrust ; followed by a sort of melting out of the sun into a brief, shapeless running as of molten ore low upon the sea-line, where the billows leapt black against it ; till the gale, like some baffled, sentient thing, stormed up afresh with a long victorious yelling in its western flight, crowding cloud upon cloud there with such rapid smothering of the tarnished hectic, that in a few moments you knew not where to look for the place behind which the luminary had foundered.

Then followed several days of fair weather, and if it had not been for a lurking feeling of uneasiness, a sense of trouble impending, I believe I should have found enjoyment enough in this time to fully compensate me for the worries and anxieties I had suffered. For three successive days a pleasant wind from the north and east blew almost directly over our stern ; and the brig, with studding-sails overhanging the water far out on either side of her, and soothingly cradled by a subdued heave of liquid fold, as regular as a pulse, and soft as the rise and fall of a sleeper's breast, floated steadily on her course, irradiating the blue of the surge with

silver reflection from her extended canvas, whilst the short wake streamed off white as a looking-glass, as though indeed the lines of dark ripples breaking from the bow shivered spaces of the translucent sheen under the swinging booms into fragments, which veering aft occasioned the lovely metallic shining which you noticed in the furrow under the counter. Already from the slope of the rolling brows of dark blue brine the flying-fish were whisking in short, uncertain flights ; the swinish outline of the porpoise rose black and wet to the flash of the sun ; afar the snow-white spire of a ship's canvas would break the melancholy continuity of the sea-line. Our shadows shortened at noon, and so fair was the course we headed that the eye had almost the accuracy of the sextant in determining the period of the meridian, by observing the wake of the luminary rising and falling in a fan-shaped stream of gold transversely from the horizon to our larboard cathead.

One scarcely needed the comforts of the pleasure vessel to have found it all as full of such delights as go to a yachting cruise, if the

rest had been as well as sea and sky and atmosphere. But, first of all, there was Captain Broadwater again. Now that the dirty sky had been blown away, and the shrill dark gale transformed into a steady gushing of fair blue sunlit breeze, warm as a woman's breath, and filled with the aroma of a thousand leagues of ocean, the reckless old man had warped his mind back to its old moorings, and was once more falling foul of the men, often as I would think without reason, or, when justified, then always with coarse and needless temper. But that was not all. The half-blood Charles was about the deck—for I must tell you, now that we were regularly at sea it was "all hands," as the term goes, from eight bells in the morning down to four o'clock in the afternoon, with an interval of an hour from half-past eleven for dinner; and consequently it was impossible to put your head through the companion-hatch without, after a bit, seeing the half-blood at work, sometimes on the rigging, sometimes with a marline-spike on deck, but most often stitching at sailcloth stretched along the waist. It was not only the knowing that he was a murderer

that regularly affected me with a violent stir of emotion every time my eye lighted on him, though I should see him twenty times in a day ; it was the shock also, at least to my notion of shipboard discipline, to the marine habits of thought I had carried away with me from my early voyagings, coming from perception of his being at large, when without doubt he should be in irons below, and of the liberty he was now enjoying being the will of the crew. My abhorrence of Broadwater's early usage of him could in nowise temper my loathing of the olive-coloured dastard's act. Of course, the crime of which the fellow had been guilty might well make one suspect a deeper significance in every action, gesture, and speech of his than they in reality possessed ; but sometimes, in watching him furtively over the top of a book, or whilst conversing with Miss Grant, when he was not too far off for his features to be inexpressive, I would get it into my head that if ever the swift, askant glance of a human eye indicated treachery and black resolution, matured and waiting only, his did whenever Broadwater's approach courted a glance from under his dusky, drooping lids at

the old fellow. I reasoned thus : I said to myself, this man being guilty of murder, albeit he has his freedom in the brig—the liberty of a bird in a cage !—is fully aware that the gallows awaits him on his arrival in port, and that the person who will make it his especial business to procure his prompt despatch is that same red-faced, hectoring, noisy, and tyrannous skipper, at whom, when he imagines himself unperceived, he darts as malignant a glance as ever I witnessed in mortal eyes. What then ! Is it reasonable to suppose that yonder half-blood intends to resignedly suffer himself to be carried to Rio, and on the testimony of the depositions of that ship-master there, whom he abhors, to suffer with his life for his deed ? Then I would say to myself, But what is he to do ? Certainly he cannot prevent the master from navigating the brig to her South American destination. Does he contemplate suicide as his only chance of escaping the executioner ? He is under the protection of the crew ; has he any influence with them ? Assuming that he has, what use can he make of it ? Thus would I sometimes speculate, idly indeed ; yet the thoughts that

occurred to me were of a kind to rob the smooth ocean of its placidity, and the gay picture of the brig, brilliant with the serene splendour of the heavens, of something of its beauty.

However, I kept my thoughts to myself. I took care that Miss Grant should have no suspicion of what was passing in my mind, nor did I utter a word on the subject to Gordon, mainly because I felt the whole thing was mere foreboding, and that discussion of it could therefore serve no end.

CHAPTER XV.

WE SAIL THROUGH A STRANGE LIGHT.

I REMEMBER it was on the third night of this gentle weather that I was quietly walking up and down the deck with Miss Grant's hand lying lightly on my arm. Four bells had not been long struck. The night was dark, but exceedingly beautiful, with a tropical richness of starlight that yet, though to the eye it showed like a wide fine rain of silver light, suffered the sea to heave black to the confines of the hovering firmament—not a break or glance of foam anywhere, not the tiniest sparkle of the sea-glow, albeit with my companion I had overhung the quarter for many minutes to watch for any greenish cloudy rising, any yellow fibrous shooting; for of all oceanic midnight sights nothing delights me so keenly as the

movement of phosphoric swarmings in the quiet ebon brine, when the vessel has just way enough to stir the liquid blackness into shining configurations of all sorts along her sides, and to mark her passage by a jewel-like trailing of luminous bells of foam, and the emerald glare of misty puffs of fire. The brig, with studding-sails out on either side, was floating through the shadow of the night at some four or five miles in the hour. Her wide stretch of canvas rose pallid to the gloom, and died upon the eye in mere films and spaces of faintness ere the sight could penetrate to the forms of the little sails which crowned the stone-coloured pyramid. All was silent—every cloth aloft was asleep. Under the black arches of the distended canvas the stars would come and go to the movement of the fabric, like eyes of invisible shapes, peering an instant over the edge of the yards down upon the dim glimmer of the brig's decks. Gordon was in charge. I had killed half-an-hour some time before with him in talk, but when Miss Grant arrived I paired off with her, and left my hearty friend to fill the interval betwixt

the wheel and the main-rigging with lonely meditations.

I do not mind owning here, that on such a night as this it was not very easy to check in myself something of those sentimental thoughts concerning my fascinating companion which had bothered me, as I have elsewhere said, at an earlier date, and which no doubt would have continued to worry and vex me down to this hour, but for the murder of the mate and the posture of the crew. The quiet weather, and the apparent peace in the brig during the last three days, had enabled us to be much together on deck again, and to converse on subjects of a kind very different from assassination on ship-board, and the perils of passengers in vessels worked by mutinous sailors. Indeed, the long and short of it is, as we stepped the deck together this night, I felt that if our voyage to Rio should be long delayed, it must infallibly end in my falling in love with Miss Aurelia. It would not do to call the emotion a disloyalty to my cousin. What must happen cannot be helped, and there is nothing in philosophy to balk the issue, though it may teach one how to

support it. The utmost I could hope to do was to disguise my feelings, quit Rio as promptly as the shipping there would suffer, and leave the rest to old Time with his brush and whitewash. Still the position was an exceedingly uncomfortable one, and it was likely to endure long enough to render me very unhappy. For in those days I was a young man with the heart and sensibilities of youth; and to fall in love with a woman who was betrothed to another; to find my happiness subtly sneaking away, and making its existence dependent upon conditions which never could be fulfilled; to feel moreover that the emotions, which it was not in my power to suppress, were in a sense unfair to the girl—though I must always maintain that the highest compliment a man can pay a woman is to fall in love with her—whilst they were dishonouring to myself in my existing relations with my cousin, was to place myself, without being able to help it, in a position so immediately distressful as to threaten by and by to become distracting. The worst of it was that, whilst I would wish the voyage over, my conscience was sensible that the desire was

nonsense, and that I was in no hurry. To be sure it would be with no common delight that I should part with Captain Broadwater and his odious dinner-table, and take an eternal farewell of a ship's company of whose behaviour it was impossible to make sure from one hour's end to another ; but already—already ! though Miss Grant and I had been together for a fortnight only—the prospect of turning my back upon her, of saying good-bye to her at Rio, of sailing away and feeling that all I had done was to undergo the miseries of a long voyage merely to hand over the handsomest woman that I had ever met in my life—the only girl moreover I had ever encountered to whom I could have given every bit of my heart—I say, the prospect of this was all so very distasteful to me, that when I came to look into myself I was not at all astonished to find I was secretly willing that this voyage to Rio should continue, at all risks, to a period that might be indeterminable, sooner than sunder my association with the lovely and engaging girl whom my abominably thoughtless cousin had asked me to take charge of.

But these were my thoughts only. It was

not to be supposed that she would have the least suspicion of what was passing in my mind. There was nothing of the coquette in her ; no capacity of courting admiration for the mere selfish pleasure of enjoying it. As she walked by my side, the warm fragrance of her on the atmosphere, her face white to the star-shine with the sparkles of it in her eyes, I had very little doubt, believe me, that, had she guessed at the thoughts which had my heart in tow, she would have rapidly made shift to conquer the floating movements of the deck without the support of my arm upon which her left hand now rested. Upon my word, the cruellest of all women—not the more forgivable because she is unconsciously cruel—is the girl who, knowing that she is beautiful, acts without perception of the magic and influence of her graces. Fortunately for the peace of men, such women are rare. But Miss Aurelia Grant was one of them ; and, though the more intimate our association was the more, in one sense, and in a mean sense I am afraid, I enjoyed it ; yet she could never touch my hand, bend her fire-impassioned eyes upon mine, incline her stately figure to me with the

gracious, maidenly familiarity of a girl in the society of a man whom she values as a friend, without a sort of wild odd regret in me that Nature, in making her beautiful, had not also dowered her with the capacity of appreciating the significance of beauty's most artless provocation. But then the Spanish blood would account for much in her that was as teasing as it was delightful.

Now, as we quietly moved from one end of the deck to the other, there happened so strange a thing, that the like of it in these parallels, at all events, has, to my knowledge, been witnessed once only. We had been chatting as soberly as though we were uncle and niece: not the lightest of the inspirations of this most glorious night coming out of it to tincture our words or thoughts into any complexion of romance, though never might a scene of starlit gloom furnish a young fellow, already rendered sentimental enough, with a better excuse for frequent poetical flight than this in whose shadow I paced with Miss Aurelia, her ungloved hand (with the gleam, by the way, of an engaged ring meeting my eye each time I looked down) lying white

as a flake of sea-foam in the bight of my arm. I was talking about old Broadwater, and expressed my wonder that he should be able to accommodate his love of rum and his taste for "all night in," as they say at sea, with the obligation he had imposed upon himself of taking Bothwell's place.

"Spite of his many shortcomings," she exclaimed, "I should think he is too experienced a sailor, too much a seaman by habit not to be vigilant during his watch."

"Oh," said I, "I don't doubt that he keeps a bright look-out when his turn to take charge comes round. What I mean is, it is odd that he should not have chosen some one from amongst the men forward to act as second mate, Gordon now being first, for then he would be able to go to bed drunk as usual, with plenty of time to sleep off the fumes; but the long and short of it is," I added, "there's no living creature in this fore-castle to whom he durst confide his ship."

As I said this, I heard my name called, apparently from the fore-castle. We were at

that moment close to the wheel, and in the act of returning to measure the length of deck afresh. I was not a little surprised to hear myself hailed from so remote a part of the brig, and as I had not recognized the voice, I sang out, "Who wants me there?"

"Me, sir—the mate," came the answer from the bows; "will you and the lady please step this way?"

I asked Miss Grant if she would accompany me, thinking that she might be a little shy, and very reasonably shy, too, under the circumstances, of that part of the vessel.

"Certainly," she answered promptly. We had to move with caution. The pile of canvas that clothed the brig from truck to waterway deepened the midnight obscurity of the deck, and though it was plain sailing where we had been walking, yet, once abreast of the mainmast, one had to keep a sharp look-out, by groping, for the harness-cask, scuttle-butts, coils of rigging, pump-handles, and other matters which lay between the point where the quarter-deck began and where the brig's forecastle ended. I called out, "On which side are you, Mr.

Gordon?" wondering why he wanted us, and what had carried him away from his post aft.

"On the starboard bow, sir," he rejoined; "mind the fluke of the stowed anchor as ye come along! I'm just forrard of it."

I held Miss Grant's hand, walking in front of her. The galley was locked up for the night; there was not the faintest gleam of light anywhere visible, if it were not a sort of ghostly sheen lurking like a churchyard exhalation over the fore-scuttle, from the slush lamp, as I presumed, swinging in the sailors' sea-parlour below. Indeed I was so engrossed by the occupation of picking my way, that I saw nothing until I was fairly alongside of Gordon, who pointed, with a long shadowy arm, the fingers at the end of which showed like a giant's against the stars, over the horizon, and exclaimed, "Mr. Musgrave, sir, saw any man ever the like o' that? What can it be?"

He held his arm levelled, and following its indication I saw, right ahead of the ship, standing apparently upon the ocean at the distance of the horizon, an arch of light, or rather, let me say, a shape of dim white radiance,

that arched in perfect outline from one leg to another that appeared to rest upon the black surface of the deep to within three or four degrees of the sea-line, as though its foot had broken away. There is nothing so deceptive as distance at sea. The light, when I first saw it, might have been within gunshot, or it might have been a couple of leagues away from us. The radiance had the tint of moonshine, and was as visibly defined upon the velvet dusk as though painted there by the sweep of a brush dipped in white fire. You saw the stars shining close against the rim of it, all round and under the arch of it, where they sparkled like the riding-lights of ships.

“What is it, Mr. Musgrave?” exclaimed Gordon, in the voice of a man not only awed, but even alarmed.

“I wish I could tell you,” said I. “It looks like the fiery trail of a comet that has swept in an arc from behind the sea, and gone to pieces in the blackness before it had perfected the semi-circle.”

“We are steering directly for it!” exclaimed Miss Grant.

The watch on deck, disturbed in the naps they were taking in secret corners by Gordon's call to me, had collected near us, and you heard the growling of their voices as they pointed ahead, marvelling, as we did, one to another, at the startling, beautiful, radiant appearance. I heard one say, "Jim, it's a sort of vast com-preesant. There's no luck for the vessel as sights them shows."

Another said, "If we are to sail through it, stand by! The likes of them lights, I've heerd, strikes men green if they smites 'em full."

"What in thunder can it be?" repeated Gordon; "'tain't anything burning out there, is it? How fur do it stretch? Can any man tell? Looks to me to be a-widening."

One of the shadowy group beside me exclaimed, "Job is to know how fur off it lies. I allow there's all ten mile between them legs."

"Vast there!" cried another, "ten mile! I'll swap my chest agin your Scotch cap afore eight bells this blooming night if them legs is a mile wide."

"I'll go aft and report it to the captain," said Gordon, in a voice that betrayed the agitation

he was labouring under. "Never see'd the like of such a thing in all my time. Beats all my going a-fishing, sir. Why, it's a object that ain't in nature; and if we don't give it a wide berth it'll be a bad look-out for some of us, or I wasn't christened Zana!" And apparently as much subdued as if he had seen a ghost, or heard some spectral voice up in the air bidding him prepare for his end, he slunk away from our side, and vanished in the darkness as he made his way to the cabin.

When he was gone a deep silence fell. The men ceased to speak: Miss Grant and I gazed without exchanging a syllable: nothing was to be heard but the soft shearing of the cut-water beneath us, rending the liquid indigo with the noise as of the tearing of satin. The blackness under the bows was profound—not a sparkle of phosphor to catch the eye, not the sickliest flake of starshine to express the invisible heave of the deep by the wire-like widening of it to the movement. I looked behind me at the towering canvas on the fore-mast, and found a strange solemnity in the visionary beauty of the silent, swelling, airy

concavities mounting in pale vague surfaces into the stooping dusk ; but whether near or distant, the mystic arch of light ahead threw not the feeblest gleam upon that soaring surface that spectrally dilated on either hand to the pinions of the studding-sails which faded into a hovering faintness far beyond the sides. The mysterious sheen to our approach seemed to gather a quicker tincture of lustre, as of the diamond, or some clear glittering star. It is impossible to express the startling loveliness of this apparition of luminous arch against the midnight sky, with the stars shining down to its rim, and spangling the hollow to the sea-line within. 'Twas as though God's hand had set up a sign in the sky for us to behold ; and the men now were so dumb in the face of it, that you easily guessed how impressed and awed they were. Most of the watch below had come up to have a look, but each new-comer's first murmur of wonder speedily died in the hush that was upon the others.

"What is it, do you think, Mr. Musgrave?" said Miss Grant, in a voice a little above a whisper.

“Were we far north or south,” I replied, “one would make it intelligible by reference to the Northern Lights or to the magnificent display of the Aurora Australis, with its sudden pale flashings and spiral coruscations. No doubt yonder beautiful object is something of the kind, electric—phosphoric—call it what you will. But is it not worth seeing? Why, one would sail round the world even with old Broadwater for such possession of memory as that glorious span will yield!”

“It will fill these poor fellows with superstitious fancies,” she said, speaking very softly. “Did you hear one of them say that people who sail through such things are struck green?”

I could not help laughing, and said, “Yes; but it is possible to be green without passing through such an arch as that. If these sailors, now, were Roman Catholics after the type of the mariners of Columbus’s day, they would be on their knees chanting litanies, and making the air melodious with their *Salve Regina*’s. But is not superstition excusable amongst seamen? Look at that wonderful sight, Miss Grant. Imagine yourself run backwards by the stream

of time three hundred years—before the scientific man had broken loose, when the world was bare of problem-solvers, when all interpretation was deliciously romantic and tenderly poetical. What then would you think of such a sight as that! It would be no mere phosphoric or electric arch. No, no; but some paradisiacal bridge of ethereal crystal, such as St. John may have gazed upon without having recorded it; and be sure that your young-eyed imagination, fired by sheer ecstasy of superstition, would readily discern the forms of angelic beings with wings of pearly light, and raiment as lustrous as a moonbeam, flitting along it to the stars upon which its unfinished end to the left there seems to rest.”

I merely talked thus to provoke her, delighting in the high moods which even such idle stuff as this would induce in her. But unfortunately it was not only that we were not alone; I had scarcely made an end, when old Broadwater, followed by Gordon, rolled floundering and tumbling on to the fore-castle. He came and stood close against me, puffing and blowing in such a manner that my nose was a

long way ahead of my ears in detecting that if he was not actually drunk he must have turned in very well primed. He stared for some moments in silence, breathing hard, and then burst out, "Well, boil me alive, if ever I seed the likes of that! 'Tain't fire, neither. What do *you* call it, Mr. Gordon?"

"Got no idea, sir," answered the mate, speaking as before with a note of awe and depression in his voice. "Shall we shift the helm while there's time? It looks close aboard now, and we shall be into it if we don't mind."

"Shift the hellum!" cried Broadwater. "What for? D'ye think it's land, man? Why, what else is it but what they calls a luminous fog? And who's going to diverge for a thick-ness you can see through?"

Some man said, "That there's no luminous fog, master. It's a big, strike-me-blind com-preesant. Look out! It may foul our mast-heads as we pass under it, and who's to know that we shall ever be heard of arterwards?"

Broadwater, who had been peering hard into my face, seemed on a sudden to distinguish me, and without apparently heeding the man who

had spoken, exclaimed, "Hope you're enjoying of it, Mr. Musgrave. 'Tain't often a sight like that's chucked in for naught in a voyage to Rio."

"Am I to shift the helm, sir?" said Gordon.

"Certainly not!" roared the old fellow, "didn't ye hear me say so just now? Cook me alive, Mr. Musgrave, if sailors be men fit even to make soldiers of! Diwerge because there's a lunar rainbow in the road!" He seemed to be struck by his own fancy. "It's a lunar rainbow," he shouted, "one of the finest I ever see."

"Where's the moon to make him?" said a voice.

"Keep all on as ye are, Mr. Gordon; all on as ye are!" said Broadwater, with an ominous growl in his tones, that was like an intimation to the little company of shadows standing near him to hold their peace. "Steady as she goes, sir!" And so saying he staggered away from the rail, and went swinging towards the quarter-deck, singing out to the helmsman as he went, "Steady as she goes, my man! steady as she goes!"

We had neared the shining appearance so

rapidly, that I suspected it must have been very much closer to us when first sighted than we had imagined. It cast no reflection upon the dark waters under it, nor sheen upon the air beyond the line of its own irradiation, as you saw by the shine of the stars close down upon it. As we were under a steady helm, it soon became plain that the sparkling arch was slowly trending to larboard. When it first showed out, our jibbooms seemed to point fair for the centre of it, whereas now the right leg had drawn on to our starboard bow. The obscurity seemed the blacker for that light. I'd look aloft and around, wondering that no illumination came from the mystical burning to touch the sails, or to put a sparkle into the eyes of the staring men. They were grumbling freely, swearing that nothing but ill-luck could attend our passage through the luminous thing, and heaping curses upon the captain for his drunken obstinacy. Gordon had followed Broadwater on to the quarter-deck, but Miss Grant and I held our place against the fore-castle-rail. Within half-an-hour of the object heaving into view, we were close upon it. Even when our

flying-jibboom end was silvered by contact with the luminosity, the jibs themselves hung black as thunder-clouds against the shining. I had just time to note the wondrous sweep of this mighty arch, extending like a vast hueless rainbow into the clear obscure, when the light was all about us. I begged my companion to look aft; the spectacle was incomparable for splendour and shadow, heightened by the elements of mystery and fear. The swelling sails at the fore—studding-sail upon studding-sail to the topgallant yard-arm, and white cloths rounding and rising from forecourse to crowning royal—leapt into spaces of bland, almost milk-white light to the touch of this atmospheric radiance, and floated gleaming whilst the rest of the brig from the fore-rigging lay black and buried; but very swiftly the whole vessel leapt into this midnight effulgent vision, and no searching moonlight could have offered a clearer view of her. Every man's shadow swung at his feet; the atmosphere was a wide white gushing; the very trucks at the lofty mastheads shone out with the dull light of frosty silver buttons. Aft, upon the quarter-deck, you saw the motion-

less dark figures of Broadwater and the mate, standing as though this mystical illumination possessed some hellish quality that had blasted them into stirlessness. The fellow at the wheel gripped the spokes without a move in his posture that seemed to me full of terror and awe. Many of the crew, whilst our jibboom was yet penetrating this burning mist, and whilst the forecastle still lay in blackness, had jumped below with sharp cries of alarm, warning one another to beware of the light, that it turned the flesh green, that it was fatal to those it shone on, and the like. But a few men lingered, though when the brig was fair in the radiance I marked them in cowering attitudes, one stooping low at the windlass end, another crouching with his arms against his forehead, a third in a posture of recoil at the heel of the bowsprit, as I have seen people terror-stricken by a sudden dazzling flash of lightning. The heave of the sea was like the swelling of a sheet of silver. But in less than three minutes, as nearly as I could calculate, I marked the jibboom and jibs turn black, then the forecastle stole into the midnight again, and preternatural

beyond expression was the spectacle of the swelling canvas, bright for a breath to us who stood in blackness, then vanishing upon the sight as though the whole fabric had been formed of star-lighted mist that had melted on a sudden. In a few minutes the brig was once more sailing along in darkness, and the glorious arch was over her stern, with what was now its left limb, viewing it from the forecastle, veering away upon our larboard quarter.

CHAPTER XVI.

BROADWATER'S PROPOSAL.

HAD we been a large ship full of passengers, such an astonishing sight as a silver arch, self-luminous, yet without power to pale the close-lying stars, with overflow of its sheen, spanning a space of the midnight waters and resembling nothing, as I then supposed, ever seen south of the polar verge of the temperate parallels north of the equator, would have given us enough to talk about to serve to the end of the voyage. But wonderment is brief when its sphere of diffusion is slender. Miss Grant and I talked the subject out promptly, and then there was nobody left to say more about it. Broadwater, it is true, at breakfast next morning persisted in declaring that it was a lunar rainbow; though, had he stuck to his first notion that it was a

luminous mist, I am not sure that his guess would have been far out.

“How are you going to get a lunar rainbow without the moon?” I said.

“Who says that it *is* to be got?” he answered. “The moon’s always somewheres about, I suppose; and why shouldn’t she be able to chuck one of them appearances upon the sky when she’s out of sight, just as she do when she’s within view of the eye? There’s no call for her to be overhead for shows of that kind to happen. I once see a beautiful rainbow, right over our mastheads, a full half-hour after the sun had gone down. You may depend upon it that there arch last night was a lunar rainbow.”

I liked him too little to argue with him, lover as I am of the absurd ideas of stupid, prejudiced, ignorant old sailors. Besides, the thing was a phenomenon not to be explained by anybody aboard that brig at all events, and to be accepted therefore as one of the many thrilling and beautiful mysteries of old ocean’s sombre or sunlit solitudes.

I was not however a little surprised to find that what I had deemed the mere passing de-

pressing influence of the apparition upon the spirits of Gordon continued to weigh upon him. This was made apparent when Broadwater, after favouring us with his views on the subject of lunar rainbows and other atmospheric effects, most of which were no doubt coloured by the bottle of rum through which he had inspected them, went on deck that the mate might get his breakfast.

“Have any of the hands turned green since last night, Mr. Gordon?” said I.

“No, sir,” he answered. “Most of ’em jumped below, I hear; t’others dodged the sheen. They reckoned upon some of them showing blighted though when daylight came along; and if the watch had turned out blue, let alone *green*, hang me, Mr. Musgrave!” he exclaimed, hitting the table with the handle of his knife to emphasize his language, “if I for one should have been surprised, for never did a more scaring sight arise before the eyes of a sailor.”

His subdued and dejected manner was more striking than his words. I glanced at Miss Grant, whose fine eyes, full of thought, were fastened upon his face.

“The fancy amongst the men,” she exclaimed, “must have arisen from the old belief that the shining of the moon full on the face of a sleeper distorts the features, and puts an ugly colour into the complexion. The arch looked like moon-shine, and I suppose the sight made the men so nervous that it was enough for one of them to hint at anything alarming to terrify the whole.”

“I wish I’d never seen it,” he exclaimed; “it’s done me no good, miss.”

“But surely,” cried I, wondering at him, for his had always seemed to me as prosaic a mind as ever I met with in a sailor—nor could I forget his ridicule of the superstitious craze of the man who had drowned himself in the English Channel—“you do not want yourself to believe that there is anything in a mere body of luminous vapour, to call it so, to hurt or influence you, either in body or mind?”

He shook his head very despondently: I observed that he ate little, though he drank a quantity of tea, thirstily and feverishly. “I’m a poor man, sir,” he exclaimed, “but, so help me Heaven, Mr. Musgrave, I’d gladly have parted with every shilling of my savings sooner

than that the capt'n should have headed the brig slick into that shining. Beg your pardon, miss," he continued, addressing Miss Grant with a sudden eagerness, "but when ye entered that light did it feel cold to ye?"

"No," she answered, without exhibiting surprise at the question.

"You, Mr. Musgrave—did it feel chilly like? not so much upon your skin as here?" and he put his hand to his heart.

"The only sensation I can recollect," I answered, "is one of delight at the glorious picture the brig made, as she slowly floated into the radiance out of the blackness, coating herself with the quicksilver of it from the truck to the end of the swinging boom."

He was silent, then shook his head, and exclaimed: "Well, mere fancy, no doubt. It's all fancy in this here world. Without imagination there'd be nothing to hope for, nothing to be afraid of."

"There might have been a chill in the light, though we enjoyed the picture too much to be conscious of it," said Miss Grant, talking to me though speaking at Gordon.

“The strangest part of it was this, miss,” he said, looking at her earnestly, “I felt it was cold afore we entered it. ’Twas that which made me so earnest the capt’n should shift the hellum. I knew so soon as ever I came in contact with that light the bleakness of it would catch me here,” again putting his hand to his heart, “and I’d have given all I’m worth—all I’m worth,” the poor fellow cried, with a vehemence unusual in him, “to have escaped it. Up to the moment when the light had slided within a foot of me I’d no sensation but the fear of what was a-coming; but the moment it touched me I felt the chill. There was death in it, sir, there was death in it! No man ’ll ever persuade me contrary-wise.”

He checked what I was about to say by rising with an apologetic glance at the skylight, to let us know he could linger no longer, and immediately went on deck.

I had so much faith in the steadiness of Gordon’s intellect that I could only accept this odd posture in him as due to some trifling functional derangement, which a dose of physic or a few hours’ rest would correct. Yet it gave Miss Grant and me something to talk about. I

had some knowledge of sailors and their superstitions, and kept her amused for an hour or two with stories of wizards of Finnish origin, who sold favourable gales of wind to credulous mariners ; of bald human heads, with little laughing black eyes and capacious grinning mouths, rising to the surface, and terrifying Jack by asking questions in a tongue unknown to any nation under the stars, and then disappearing with a shriek of derisive laughter ; of ghostly shapes alighting on the yard-arms, and kindling corpse-lights there, by whose dismal illumination the mariner could see phantom faces glimmering out into expressions of sorrow and remorse, as though grieving over the fateful missions on which they had been despatched.

However, though I had no sympathy with the queer notions which had come into Gordon's head, my own misgivings were of a kind which might very well have passed for a sort of superstition too, for they kept me incessantly foreboding disaster, though what form it was to take I never could have imagined ; and so, as you will see, the mate's despondency in its way was no more deserving of ridicule than mine.

First of all, I was more troubled than I was perhaps conscious of by the recollection of the murder that had been committed. It worried me mostly of nights ; again and again in the darkness of my cabin, and in the silence of the long watches, when the brig was sailing smoothly forwards, and all was still upon the sea, when nothing broke upon the ear but the muffled washing of water outside, and the faint jar and creak of the fabric within, the vision of the mate as I saw him when he stood at the foot of the companion-steps with the grin of death in his moving and speechless lips, his right hand extended, his left hand dabbling in his shirt that was soaked, where his fingers pressed, with the life-blood draining from his heart, would rise before me horribly distinct, and keep me rolling and tumbling in my bunk, till more than once it ended in my jumping up, lighting the lamp, and clothing myself, and killing a couple of sleepless hours with pipes of tobacco and a drain or two from the private stock in the next cabin. Then again, as I have before said, it was a cause of no small consternation to me, secret as the emotion was, to

feel that the man who had committed this murder moved freely about the ship, enjoying his liberty and the protection of the crew, and had all necessary leisure besides to converse with the men, and to influence them to any purpose he might have in his mind. Indeed I formed a darker opinion of the sailors from their willing association with the ruffian, and the jokes I would hear them exchanging with him, than from any other sort of conduct I had as yet witnessed in them. It was un-English—a harsh, bad, jarring note in the rough and rude harmony of British fore-castle-life ; and this feature of our shipboard existence was the uglier to my mind for the man being a foreigner. Such half-bloods as this Charles, at best, are a people alongside whom our Jacks do not much care to sling their hammocks nor eat out of the same kid with ; but in addition to this man's deformity of breed was his proved quality as a “knifer”—a characteristic unpleasantly common to those skins, and half the secret at least of the aversion they inspire in English crews. Detestable as Bothwell had been as a man, the crime of his murder was more to be abhorred even

than he; and I say it worked in me like a superstition to see his assassin coming and going about the decks, fetching his meals from the caboose along with the others, singing out at the ropes, or hailing from aloft in the voice of a lively hearty—but always with the same sharp, stabbing gleam in his eyes whenever he turned them upon Broadwater—and making a part of the brig's honest routine, when his proper lodging was the forepeak, his fit equipment the bilboes, and his rightful condition the completest practicable isolation from his shipmates.

These and twenty more such thoughts were in my mind after Miss Grant had withdrawn to her berth, and whilst I remained alone watching the shambling figure of the cabin-boy stripping the cabin-table, with a hungry goggling of his eyes at the remains of the meal as he staggered up the hatchway with the dishes. I was mechanically rolling a cigar between my fingers, with the intention of lighting it and going on deck, when Broadwater came below. I supposed he would pass to his cabin, for, now that he divided the look-out with Gordon, he was

very punctual in going to bed when it came to his turn to quit the deck. Instead, he halted, took a survey of the cabin as if to make sure that we were alone, and then came and sat down near me.

"Mr. Musgrave," said he, speaking with hesitation and awkwardly, "I knew that you was at sea as a youth, sir; but I wasn't aware, till Mr. Gordon just now told me, that you considered yourself equal to taking charge of the deck and navigating a craft."

I looked at him, wondering what was in his mind.

"I hope," he continued, "you'll find nothing offensive in what I'm about to observe. The fact's this. Now that my mate's overboard, there's no man but me in this here brig, barring yourself, with knowledge enough of the quadrant to know what part to put his eye at, if so be he should need to use it. Now, if I should fall sick, who is there, onless it be you, sir, who'd be able to carry on the navigation of this here brig? Gordon tells me that you yourself said to him a short while ago you'd be willing, if asked, to take a mate's berth aboard of me.

Now, Mr. Musgrave, what d'ye say? Gordon's agreeable to fall back into his old *spear*, and if you'll take his place as mate, sir, I should be glad, very glad indeed; though of course I won't say nothing about remooneration, that being a matter you might afterwards settle with the owner."

"I am obliged to you for your offer," said I. "I certainly did say something to Gordon about being willing to lend a hand in the navigation of the brig, should my services in that way ever be required; but as to taking a post of command over your crew——" I shook my head. "I don't like their attitude; I don't like the idea of your mate's murderer being at large; I don't like to think that there's any body of English sailors who can not only protect but remain friends with a half-blood, a foreign miscreant, whose knife, in my humble opinion, is as ready for another man's heart as it was for Mr. Bothwell's."

"Ay," said he hoarsely, leaning towards me with a look at the skylight, and then at the hatch, "that's just it. Ye've hit it true as a hair. It's more because I want to feel that we're

stronger than we are aft than because I may fall sick that I'd be glad to see you mate first or second, as you may elect. I don't mind telling you," he continued, in the same hoarse, subdued voice, and with another look up and around, "that the aspect of the present biling don't sit pleasingly upon my eyes, sir. Ye heard what Gordon said that night of the murder, when he came down—how the half-blood 'ud do for *me*, too, if I didn't keep a bright look-out. Well, I tell you, I've learnt to fear that man. I don't like his looks. I met his eye just now, and it was like the snap of a musket at me. I haven't said much about it, in fact I haven't said anything ; and maybe it's weighed the more upon me, 'cause I kept myself shut up on the subject. But it's a long way to Rio yet, sir, and my fear of what that man's capable of is a weight that I must chuck over the side somehow or other. My notion is, then, that if you took the mate's berth the men 'ud like it, you being a gentleman. They'd feel your influence after a bit, and by expressing of your feelings to them in the sort of language that my neglected education as a boy keeps me as a man a-falling

short of, they might grow ashamed of their protection of the half-blood, and be willing to let us clap him in irons, when of course I should be able to sleep sound again, and enjoy my meals with the old satisfaction."

He looked at me with a mixture of eagerness and cunning in his little eyes. I did not need to reflect, for whilst he had been speaking I had made up my mind.

"I thank you for your good opinion of me," said I; "I cannot accept any such post as you propose. 'Twas a mere fancy tossed to the bo'sun in the course of a talk, with no wish or resolution in it at all; but, though I decline your offer, you will of course understand that I am quite prepared to support you in any time of trouble; always presuming," I added significantly, "that the authority you exercise, but which may be resisted, is fair, legitimate, and consistent with regular sea-duties."

"Have ye got any weapons of your own?" he asked, with another look up and around.

"Yes," I answered.

"What are they, sir?"

"A brace of pistols," said I.

"Any hammunion?"

"Ay," I replied smiling, "enough to send ten times the number of your crew to their account."

"That's all right," said he; "I'm armed too, armed enough to be able to sarve out what's needful to Gordon, and to have enough left for myself and *more*, if we can get others to help us. Would you mind doing this, sir?—get in with the men in a proper sort of condescending way, so as there could be nothing bemeaning in the thing to a gent of your spirit, and find out if there's e'er a man forward who is to be trusted to stand by and look on, should you and me and Gordon arrange to rush the job."

"I don't fully understand," said I.

"Well, I'll tell ye," he exclaimed, with his eyes very full of cunning and eagerness, "the notion that's come into my head's this: if we could count on so many of the men standing aloof, should it come to a melhee, then for the safety of all consarned I should propose that

you and me and Gordon should arm ourselves, have the handcuffs ready, fall upon and secure the half-blood when no man could suspect our intentions, drag him aft and lock him up down here, and with our pistols keep any of the crew off who should attempt a rescue."

"The scheme is practicable," said I, after a little, "but it requires consideration. At the first sight I don't half like it. I see your difficulty—I clearly perceive that unless this half-blood be secured and removed from all intercourse with the crew, diabolical mischief may follow. I realize this: that at one end of the ship is a murderer, at the other end a man who is only waiting to get him to Rio to hang him." He nodded vehemently. "*He* knows that, and the question is, is he going to give you the chance to hang him?"

"That's the question!" he cried, bringing his fist down heavily upon the table.

"Yes," I exclaimed, "and it has haunted me pretty smartly of late, I can assure you. But, on the other hand, a melhee, as you call it—this project of seizing the half-blood

and threatening the sailors with our small-arms—might, indeed it *would*, end in rank, staring, hellish mutiny. What then would you do? There are but three of us against the whole ship's company. The safety of the lady who is on board this vessel under my protection is my first consideration. It would be a poor look-out to set fire to a ship in order to get rid of a rat. It would be an equally poor look-out to excite the men into wild revolt against the three of us, to the imperilling of the life and honour of Miss Grant, for all we dare predict, simply that your mind may be eased by having the half-blood under lock and key."

"Then what's to be done?" he exclaimed coarsely, and in a defiant, quarrelsome way "The safety of the brig depends upon me, and if harm befalls *me*, what's to become of her, and you, and the lady you're so consarned about—and unwisely consarned about in my opinion, for, by not helping me, you'll be chancing to let her go adrift."

"I have told you, Captain Broadwater," said I, greatly disliking this sudden change of manner in him, for I had met his sugges-

tion in a very earnest spirit, "that in a time of extremity, which shall not—understand me—have been brought about by any act of cruelty and brutality on your part, I will support you and Mr. Gordon heart and soul. But I cannot accept the duties you ask me to undertake, nor do I see my way to offering to help you in any wild scheme of seizing the half-blood, under cover of the muzzles of our pistols, with perhaps the obligation of having to shoot down one or more of your crew, to the assured end of raising a murderous spirit amongst the men, and exciting them into God knows what act of terrible mutiny."

As I said this, Miss Grant came from her berth. I made a gesture to him to signify that no more must be said now; on which he rose and went to his cabin. She looked at me earnestly, but was silent. I handed her up the companion-ladder, lighted a cigar, and followed. The morning was deliciously fine. There was a pleasant breeze a little abaft the beam, which enabled the brig to show her lower studding-sail to it, and under broad wings packed to the trucks, the little vessel glided crisply over a sea of blue,

the beautiful dark dye of which at the horizon seemed to tincture the line of the sky, bending down past it into an opalescent shimmer through contrast of the sapphire sweep with the azure faintness behind it. The decks were dry and white, with a crystalline sparkling of salt about them. There was a short awning just abaft the skylight, and our deck-chairs were under it; but the sun was not yet high, the wind blew sweet and cool over the rail; life was stirred to her innermost sources by the freshness of the morning, and to sit would have been to forfeit half the delights of this radiant day. On our quarter, steering north, was a brigantine, toy-like in the distance; the sunlight flashed an ivory whiteness on her windward canvas, whilst the violet shadowing on the leeward cloths made them look to be melting on the airy blue beyond. There was a spot of colour in her rigging, and Gordon, from the other side, called out to me that she was a Dane. There was nothing else in sight, and the mighty stretch of water, under the dazzle of the soaring sun, looked the vaster for that fairy-like fabric upon it.

I threw a swift glance along our decks, and noticed that the men worked quietly upon their various jobs. A couple of them were busy on some chafing-gear in the fore-rigging ; a spun-yarn winch was rattling on the fore-castle ; and the half-blood Charles, with his back upon us, dressed in blue dungaree, a red cap on his head, and chocolate-coloured shanks bare to the knees, was balling up the stuff as it was manufactured. The cook was standing in the door of his little galley, smoking a sooty pipe, his naked arms folded upon his breast, watching the cabin-boy close by washing some plates and dishes in a tub. High aloft on the fore-royal-yard stood the figure of a man, who had paused in some work he was upon up there to stand erect with his hand on the truck, and the sharp of his other hand over his eyes, whilst he gazed into the immeasurable distance visible to him from that altitude. The tall, muscular seaman, Terence Mole, was at the helm, his hands carelessly gripping the spokes of the wheel, his attitude full of that indefinable, floating ease that enters as a sort of grace into the posture and movements of the true deep-water sailor. All these were details to fill my eye in a breath ;

and on the surface the picture was so homely, there seemed so much salt, plain honesty in the complexion, quality, aspect of the full scene, that my instant recurrence to what but a little while before had passed between the captain and myself, affected me as an unreality, as something that I had imagined, as an affront to the truth of this quiet, inboard picture, and to the high, wide, refreshing splendour through which our little craft was softly pushing.

When we emerged from the cabin, Miss Grant made some commonplace remark about the beauty of the morning ; but we had scarcely measured half the length of the deck when, looking at me wistfully and searchingly also, she exclaimed, " What has happened to worry you, Mr. Musgrave ? "

" I must look worried, I suppose," I answered, smiling, " or you would not ask the question."

" You do, indeed. It is some anxiety that concerns this voyage, of course. There can be nothing else, for there are no postmen here to bring you disagreeable news ; at least I *hope* the cause lies in the voyage." " If it does, will you tell me what it is ? "

Now my immediate impulse was to answer her evasively ; but on meeting her gaze, I observed so much fearlessness in it, so much clear and keen intelligence, along with so direct a challenge to me to be plain with her or not speak at all, and so unmistakable an assurance besides of a guess that had already carried her half-way into the truth, that I said to myself with the swiftness of one who thinks, "Why not be perfectly candid with this woman? The wit and instincts of her sex may help me."

She kept her gaze fastened upon me, and seemed to read my thoughts. She said, with a little smile very full of pride, "Do you know, Mr. Musgrave, if Alexander ever had a doubt, he would come to me to settle it for him. I am fond of problems. If I were a man, I should wish to be a politician above all things. I should love to be in a position where my judgment would be constantly tested, and where I should have to act quickly. What is best in a sailor's character springs from this habit. He is incessantly confronted by surprises, many of them tragical, all of them requiring instant resolution." She preserved her smile,

still continuing to look at me. I suspected she talked to give me time to think.

“My anxiety,” said I, “concerns our position on board this vessel—*your* position chiefly. What could offer a more peaceful picture than these decks? How softly the shadows sway! The men are working as quietly as if the whole gladness of the morning were in them; and yet, since you wish to know the truth, Miss Grant, I should say that if these planks were growing insufferably hot from fire below—raging, but as yet concealed—our outlook would be more distinctly satisfactory to my mind than it is now, staunch as the brig is, quiet as these fellows seem, calm and glowing as the whole picture all about us shows.”

She threw a glance around her, and said quietly, “What has occurred to put these thoughts into you?”

I came to a halt, our faces fronting the forecastle, and indicating the half-blood by a movement of my head, I said, “That fellow there knows that on the arrival of this brig he must be hanged, or in some other manner dispatched for the murder of Mr. Bothwell.

He also knows that the man who is resting in the cabin under our feet means to get him killed for his crime." The half-blood turned his head at this moment, and we resumed our walk. "You say you are fond of problems. Here is one for you. That fellow forward has the sympathies of the whole crew. He has more: he has their protection, and they will not allow a finger to be laid upon him. Aft is a captain who stands alone."

"The problem, Mr. Musgrave?"

"How is Captain Broadwater to sail the ship to Rio, and set you and me safely ashore there, with yonder olive-coloured villain closely and intimately associated with the crew—popular amongst them as the hero who freed them from the tyranny of the mate—conscious, maybe, of their willingness to help him save his life, which he knows must be forfeited on the arrival of the brig?"

"What do you fear?"

"That Master Ernest Charles yonder will contrive that this brig shall never reach her port."

"By what means?"

"Ha!" said I, "there it is, Miss Grant."

She threw another swift glance around her and slightly knitted her brows. "Can we not contrive to find out what Captain Broadwater thinks?" she said.

I exactly repeated my conversation with him in the cabin. She listened until I had made an end, and then said quickly, "Mr. Musgrave, if you will be advised by me, you will take no part in any scheme the captain may decide upon as regards the discipline of the vessel. The men know that they have your sympathies, and should trouble come, they will—at least they *may*—remember that you were their friend. But what would be the result of your siding with the captain, helping him to put that wretched creature yonder in irons, perhaps being obliged in self-defence to shoot one of the crew? We have a right to think of our safety. Captain Broadwater has imperilled it by his treatment of the men, and I say we have a right, Mr. Musgrave, to think of ourselves. My advice is, be neutral."

I dare say I was the more impressed by what she said, because of her having given prompt and clear expression to my own secret

opinions. The judgment that concurs with our own must be, of course, very shrewd and sagacious. But I could also find a good deal to admire in the quickness with which she had seen into the thing, and the accuracy of her insight. For, after all, it only needed a little thought to enable me to conclude, that as Gordon hardly seemed a man to prove serviceable in a crisis—being just a plain, sober, slow-minded sailor, whose tastes were altogether forward, and who in his heart loved the captain as little as the others—the main burden of Broadwater's project must be borne by him and me ; that a conflict between us and the crew must inevitably end in our defeat, and perhaps in our destruction, for the sight of a levelled pistol would serve, as a wand in the hand of a wizard, to raise the foulest of evil spirits among the people of the brig ; and that if I were not slaughtered outright in the struggle with the men, they would extend their hatred of the captain to me in an equal measure, so that, in a word, I should be practically helpless as a protector in any form or fashion for Miss Grant. Indeed, this was the essential meaning of her advice to me—her entreaty

almost ; yet I thought I would sound her womanly judgment a little further.

“You are perfectly right, and I shall be guided by you. But suppose the captain should be set upon by the men—I mean treacherously—without furnishing them with an inch of honest justification, would it not be my duty as well as my policy to stand by him ?”

“But is he likely to be set upon unless he provokes them ? And judging from what we have seen, if he provokes them, will he not deserve the treatment he may receive at their hands ?” she answered, with a flash of indignation in her look which gave me to know that old Broadwater must expect no commiseration from her, happen what might.

“I am heartily sorry,” said I, with a smile which instantly brought the light of one into her face, though my own grin was pure admiration without the faintest flavour of mirth ; for her beauty showed rich just then to the mood excited in her by our conversation, and admiration will often make a man smile as though he had a joke in his head when, God knows, his heart may be full of mirthless emotion—“I am mightily sorry that I was ever at sea as a sailor.

Were I a landsman making my first voyage, I should find little or nothing to worry me in what has happened ; particularly now that the roll of the commotion is smoothed out, and everything," I added, with a look along the peaceful decks, "is as placid on the surface as the waters of a canal."

"A little patience, Mr. Musgrave!" she exclaimed. "Rio is closer than it was a fortnight ago." I was not so sure of that, but I said nothing. "At all events," she continued, "we must take care that you return home in a good ship, with a pleasant captain."

"Yes," said I, "we must see to that."

"Alexander will be able to advise you," she said, with a softening of her voice to the utterance of his name. "He is sure to know of a good ship, one that might be quite worth waiting for if she is not at Rio."

"Confound Alexander!" I thought to myself; and her way of speaking of him so teased me, that it would have soothed the momentary irritation to have told her that I heartily wished he stood in my boots on board this brig. But a glance at her made me feel that the expression of such a wish would have been preposterously

insincere. No ; our situation was uncommonly dark and uncomfortable : no man knowing the truth would have dared venture to predict that to-morrow would find us as we were to-day ; and still my enjoyment of her society topped every risk I could contemplate ; and how detestable the project of our association coming to an end was to me, I knew by my inward perturbation that followed on her speaking of Alexander and his choosing me a good ship to return in.

An hour passed. Our conversation was chiefly about the crew, and the outlook they threatened, and again and again she advised me not to entertain any scheme old Broadwater might submit, but to view myself wholly as a passenger, without further concern in the voyage than its conclusion. She then, feeling tired, took a chair under the awning and put a book upon her knee, but seemed to have no eyes for anything but the crew, whom she watched curiously, as might an artist who gazes for effects of colour, posture, and expression. All this while Gordon trudged the weather-deck alone. I now crossed over to him.

“ Feel more cheerful by this time, I hope, Mr Gordon ? ” said I ; “ a man’s spirits must

be gloomy indeed that don't brighten out to such a day as this."

He forced a grin, and said, "Worrit, sir, worrit; there's no accounting for a man's feelings. I wish it 'ud come on to blow. This here smiling kind of weather is all very well when ye ain't in a hurry; but when ye've got bows forrard like the head of a puncheon, and beam enough for a score of fandangoes 'twixt the rails, without call to stop even a coil of halliards to the standing rigging to get more room, then what one wants is the relieving-tackles hauled taut, and two chaps sweating at the wheel, and the spritsail-yard out of sight in the smother over the bows."

"You're in as great a hurry as Miss Grant," I exclaimed.

"Greater, I dessay," he exclaimed. "To tell ye the truth, Mr. Musgrave, I'm sick of the voyage. None of these here small brigs for me again, sir. Never no more! Nothen less than a thousand ton. A man's nature seems able to stand upright when he's aboard a big ship; in these here small craft it's all stooping for fear of knocking your brains out."

There was a sour expression on his face

which strictly corresponded with the sentiment and note of his grumbling. I said to him, "Gordon, an odd thought came into my head just now. Notice the half-blood yonder. He's a clearer menace to our safety than an auger working through the ship's bottom. Now what think you of the scheme of the captain—of you and me arming ourselves with loaded pistols, springing upon him unawares, handcuffing him, and dragging him aft under cover of the muzzles of our small arms?"

"What do I think of it, sir?" he exclaimed, without a moment's hesitation.

"Yes," I rejoined.

"This," said he. "If there's any gunpowder aboard, better knock the head off a barrel and snap one of your pistols into it, and blow the whole blooming mess of us to heaven. But you're not serious?"

"No, no," said I; "certainly not. Mere fancy, and nothing more. But not to your liking, evidently."

"Good God!" he exclaimed, "at the first offer to touch Charles, pistol or no pistol, the whole crew 'ud be on ye like one man. *They'd*

like the scheme. It's the sort of chance they're waiting for. For Heaven's sake, don't go and suggest your notion to the capt'n, sir. He's just the sort of man to entertain it, and to come and ask me to help him."

"Would you help him?" said I.

"Let him ask me first, Mr. Musgrave," he replied, with an odd look at me out of the corner of his eyes. If this was not news, 'twas what I needed to get from his lips. Even had Miss Grant's advice not already settled my mind, Gordon's askant glance, that was more eloquent than words, would have decided me out of hand, there and then. In truth it could but prove as I had foreseen, should I consent to help the captain; and I remember that I let out my breath in a half-wild sigh of relief over the determination I had formed as I turned from Gordon to take a chair at Miss Grant's side.

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